

QQI Review Report 2022

Inaugural Review of Dublin and Dún Laoghaire
Education and Training Board



QQI REVIEW

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Foreword

Quality and Qualifications Ireland (QQI) is responsible for the external quality assurance of further and higher education and training in Ireland. One of QQI's most important statutory functions is to ensure that the quality assurance procedures that providers have in place have been implemented and are effective. To this end, QQI conducts external reviews of providers of further and higher education and training on a cyclical basis. QQI is currently conducting the inaugural review of quality assurance in education and training boards. Cyclical review is an element of the broader quality framework for ETBs composed of: statutory quality assurance guidelines; quality assurance approval; annual quality reporting; dialogue meetings; the National Framework of Qualifications; validation of programmes; and, most crucially, the quality assurance system established by each ETB. The inaugural review of quality assurance in education and training boards runs from 2020-2023. During this period, QQI will organise and oversee independent reviews of each of the sixteen education and training boards. On conclusion of the sixteen reviews, a sectoral report will also be produced identifying system-level observations and findings.

The inaugural review evaluates the implementation and effectiveness of the quality assurance procedures of each ETB with a particular focus on the arrangements for the governance and management of quality; teaching, learning and assessment; and self-evaluation, monitoring and review. These are considered in the context of the expectations set out in the relevant QQI statutory quality assurance guidelines and adherence to other relevant QQI policies and procedures.

The review methodology is based on the internationally accepted and recognised approach to review:

- a self-evaluation conducted by the provider, resulting in the production of a self-evaluation report;
- an external assessment and site visit by a team of reviewers (due to the government's restrictions due to COVID-19, the review team completed a virtual visit);
- the publication of a review report including findings and recommendations; and
- a follow-up procedure to review actions taken.

This inaugural virtual review of Dublin and Dún Laoghaire Education and Training Board was conducted by an independent review team in line with the Terms of Reference at Appendix A. This is the report of the findings of the review team.

The Review Team

Each inaugural review is carried out by a team of independent experts and peers. The 2022 inaugural review of Dublin and Dún Laoghaire Education and Training Board was conducted by a team of six reviewers selected by QQI. The review team attended a briefing and training session in QQI on 16 March 2022 and the planning visit to Dublin and Dún Laoghaire Education and Training Board took place on 13 April 2022. The main review visit was conducted by the full team between 9 May and 13 May 2022. This review was conducted virtually.

Chair

Frida Hengeveld studied Social Pedagogy at the University of Utrecht (Netherlands). She has a first grade for lecturing in psychology and pedagogy and has completed an additional study in Quality Assessment and Educational Development at the University of Twente. Frida is an expert in the development of non-profit organisations such as educational institutes. She is co-author of the method/publication: EFQM in Higher Education.

After a career as teacher, staff member and director she has been a member of the board of Drenthe College (2200 students (2000-2005)), ROC Eindhoven (18.000 students (2005-2010) and CEO of AOC De Groene Welle (2700 students 2010-2018)). For 4 years (2008-2012) she was a member of the board of the MBO Raad, the branch organisation for VET institutes.

In 2018 she decided to change her working life and became a volunteer in an organisation that sends experts in education to Third World countries. She worked in Nepal, Indonesia and India as an expert in developing the organisational and quality aspects of universities. She is also active in the Netherlands on two boards of primary and secondary schools.

Coordinating Reviewer

Following a successful career in the hospitality industry across the UK and Europe, Liam Curran entered the teaching profession in 1994. In 1997, he took up the position of Head of School (Business and Professional Services) at South West College (SWC) and in 2005, was appointed Head of Higher Education to present. Since 2008, he has also held the position of SWC's Erasmus+ Coordinator for vocational education and training for staff and students.

Since 2012, he has undertaken the role of reviewer for the Quality Assurance Agency (QAA) and has contributed to the review of numerous higher education institutions across England and Northern Ireland. In 2019, he was awarded Principal Fellow of the Higher Education Academy.

Learner Representative

Áine Leonard currently lives in Galway City, studying Commerce (Global Experience) in the National University of Ireland Galway (NUIG). She completed the QQI Level 6 Business Management Course in Castle Buildings, Tullamore provided by the Laois and Offaly ETB (LOETB) in May 2020.

She chose this course to enter the field of business and see if it suited her skills and strengths. She found the course to be extremely beneficial as the skills and information she acquired proved to be valuable in both her academic and everyday life. She also participated in the Initial Review Team of the MSLETB in May of last year.

Peer Expert

Marcia Van Dooremalen has been working as a department head of (educational) quality and control at Rijn IJssel for the last six years, which is a vocational college providing a large range of vocational degrees in the region of Arnhem, the Netherlands. She is a generalist, motivated to connect people, knowledge and processes in order to improve (educational) quality.

She is lead auditor for educational quality audits and has been involved with the Dutch educational quality network in vocational education for the last seven years, developing frameworks and participating in peer reviews as an auditor.

Peer Expert

Seònaid Ó Murchadha is a disability management professional with over 20 years' experience supporting organisations on all aspects of disability inclusion. She advocates and promotes the education and employment rights of disabled people, regularly contributing pieces across news media, Irish national radio, and television. With certification from the International Disability Management Standards Council as well as recognition from the Canadian National Institute of Disability Management & Research (NIDMAR), she has worked in HR with the Rehab Group, training

and supporting 200 employees with disabilities, as well as with the Association for Higher Education Access & Disability (AHEAD) on their workplace placement initiative, the Willing Able Mentoring programme, where she supported employers to recruit and place graduates with disabilities in mainstream employment and supported disabled graduates looking for work. She also managed the successful pilot initiative, Employer Disability Information, advising employers on the recruitment, management, and retention of people with disabilities.

Seònaid currently lectures part-time to adult learners in Disability Studies at Maynooth University and works with See Change as Workplace Coordinator helping organisations eliminate stigma around mental health.

Industry Representative

Gay White is a chartered work and organisational psychologist, who runs her own consultancy business, Gay White Consulting Ltd., specialising in leadership, training, learning and organisation development, helping organisations to make sustainable change at a strategic level. She has worked with a range of public and private sector clients, across many sectors, both in Ireland and the UK. She has over thirty years' business experience, gained through a variety of roles, both in core business, learning & development and HR, predominantly in the financial services and education sectors.

Gay works as a part-time lecturer on level 8 and level 9 programmes on topics ranging from HR, Learning & Development and Organisational Psychology and has been actively involved in the design of new programmes and the re-design of existing programmes. She has designed and delivered many leadership development programmes and is licensed to work with a wide range of psychometric instruments.

Executive Summary

The review team has read, analysed and discussed the reports and documentation provided by Dublin and Dún Laoghaire Education and Training Board (DDLETB). During the main review visit, the team also met with a wide range of staff, learners, members of the management team, collaborative partners and external stakeholders. During the process of the review, the review team had a very positive and constructive engagement with the ETB.

The review team considers that DDLETB FET staff, students and stakeholders that took part in the review are to be commended on a number of fronts:

1. The self-evaluation report (SER) was highly detailed, informative and an excellent foundation for the review team to undertake an initial analysis of the work undertaken by the ETB.
2. DDLETB's FET staff and learners are to be commended that despite the challenges presented by the Covid-19 pandemic, agile systems were in place that enabled ETB further education and training (FET) staff to continue teaching and training to enable learners to achieve their qualifications.
3. The attendance at meetings held during the main review visit was almost 100%.
4. DDLETB FET staff who met with the review team were well prepared and the review team could sense their passion for education, creating opportunities for learners to develop themselves and building opportunities for the future.

The review team noted, having spoken with ETB FET staff, that during the Covid-19 pandemic lessons were learned and there was a strong commitment to finding new ways to maintain continuity of learning for learners. DDLETB FET teaching staff had to find new ways of working using digital methodologies.

Now, DDLETB must move forward, finding a new strategy to reflect new perspectives and goals. The review team heard during the main review visit that DDLETB is willing to optimise their governance structure and quality assurance system while still working to give opportunities to those who, after Covid-19, have difficulty in finding a new pathway in their lives. The flexibility shown during Covid-19 by DDLETB FET staff is needed again now, as many people from Ukraine enter the country and the education system.

The review team had in mind two analogies while completing the review. The first analogy is that of the journey the review team travelled during the main review visit. The team considered themselves privileged to have had positive interactions with many learners, staff from and key stakeholders connected to DDLETB. This was a journey through the landscape of the organisation examining key aspects of their governance and quality assurance system. The achievement of a QA system is not just an ETB goal but is also an instrumental process to enhance the quality of learning opportunities for all those learners who enrol with DDLETB's training centres, colleges and centres of learning. DDLETB provides learners with these opportunities by enhancing their learning conditions and ensuring there is a high-quality learning environment in place with the learner at its core.

The second analogy the review team considered was that of DDLETB as a bridge between learners and society as well as between learners and the labour market, Irish people and government. DDLETB, as part of the ETB sector, provides a path to a strong future for those who need just a little more attention and support.

Following the merging of the three training centres with the two vocational educational committees (VECs) in 2014, DDLETB worked on becoming one organisation with multiple locations and offers of educational pathways. The review team is of the view that the ETB did this through focussing on the quality of the work done in each of its centres and locations.

In its next stage of development, it is evident to the review team that DDLETB wants to establish a quality system that is based on a quality culture, thereby establishing a professional organisation in which staff have a proactive attitude towards learning, a cooperative mindset and a commitment to the learner as the top priority. During the Covid-19 crisis, DDLETB demonstrated how it could adapt and be flexible and responsive under conditions of global restrictions and showed it had a clear mitigating strategy with regards to teaching, learning and assessment.

During the main review visit, the review team discussed the purpose and role of DDLETB and posed the question "What is the 'Why' of DDLETB?". Through dialogue with staff, the review team discovered the 'how' of the organisation: how DDLETB intends to deliver on its mission and strategy. In meeting with learners, staff and stakeholders, and from the self-evaluation report (SER) and supporting documentation, the review team established a firm understanding of how the ETB is fulfilling its mission and core strategy that is underpinned by governance and quality assurance procedures.

The review team considers that DDLETB is operating with a level of maturity with regards to quality enhancement, governance and service delivery. This will be reflected in this report. The review team's commentary has been supported by impressive examples and case studies included in the SER. Being familiar with a range of well-established academic quality models, the review team considers DDLETB to be operating comfortably within such frameworks as well as demonstrating the capacity of a QA systems-oriented organisation.

Based on this view, the review team considers DDLETB to be a self-confident organisation that has developed in an organic way. In addition, some of the case studies presented in the SER demonstrate strong collaboration between all 16 ETBs and illustrate the collective opportunities that can be created for learner pathways in the future, contributing significantly to Irish society.

The quality assurance system in DDLETB has been a powerful instrument to organise, control and enhance the quality of the educational process. The ETB's mission is to do this "with the learner at its heart". The ambition is to further strengthen the QA system. This, combined with strengthening the quality culture, presents the challenge to minimise bureaucracy to be a responsive organisation that allows professionals to clearly realise their responsibility to their learners and the organisation. Continued leadership is crucial to the ETB in realising these goals.

Focusing the ETB's strategy on these points will yield the greatest impact for learners and, through them, society. The commendations and recommendations given in this report are intended to be constructive and supportive to DDLETB in achieving its stated objectives.

A close-up photograph of a woman with her hair in a bun, wearing a black headband and a light blue surgical mask. She is wearing a dark blue hoodie and is focused on a task. She is holding a small, clear glass bottle with both hands, and a wooden tool is visible in the foreground, partially obscuring the bottom of the bottle. The background is blurred, suggesting an indoor setting like a workshop or laboratory.

Section

1

Introduction and Context

Section 1: Introduction and Context

As outlined in the self-evaluation report (SER) and in DDLETB's Statement of Strategy (2017-2021), the ETB's vision is "to actively lead the provision of high-quality education and training" and its mission is "to provide a wide range of education and training programmes, services and supports to young people and adults across the DDLETB region". To help implement their strategy, DDLETB has identified a number of strategic goals, including the provision of high-quality education and training programmes, and a high-quality experience for learners

DDLETB is one of 16 ETBs which were established under The Education and Training Boards Act (2013). Following ministerial approval, County Dublin Vocational Education Committee (VEC) and Dún Laoghaire VEC were dissolved on 1 July 2013. Dublin and Dún Laoghaire Education and Training Board was officially established, encompassing the catchment area of the two VECs. Three former FÁS training centres (Baldoyle Training Centre, Tallaght Training Centre, and Loughlinstown Training Centre) were initially transferred to SOLAS and were then amalgamated with the new Dublin and Dún Laoghaire Education and Training Board in January 2014.

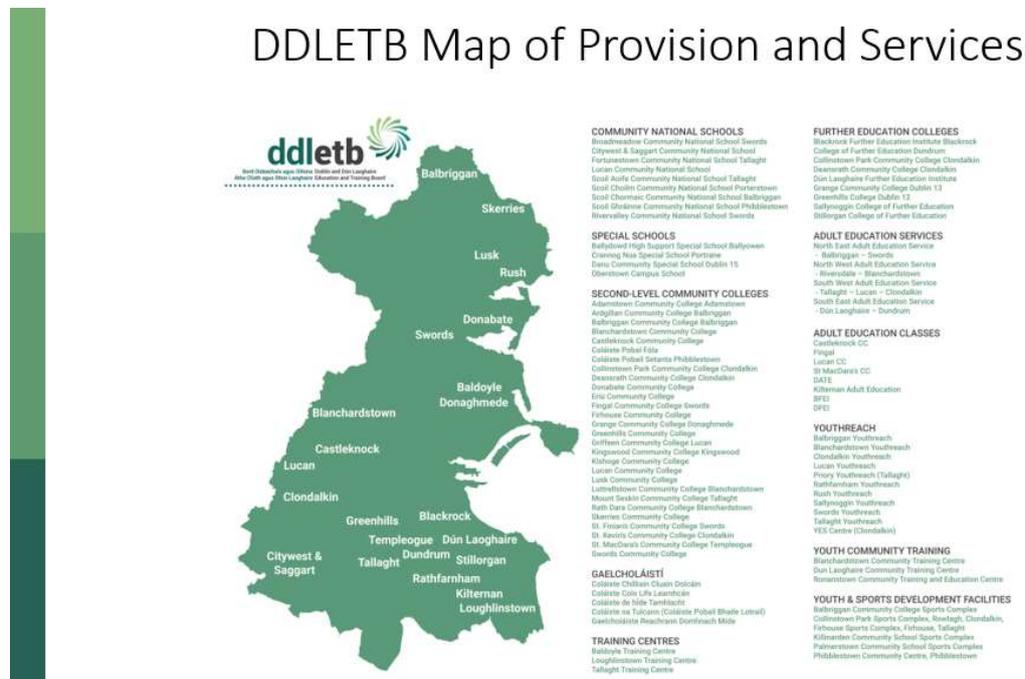
The review team learnt from the SER that DDLETB serves a population of nearly 800,000 people, with a budget of circa €230m per year and 4,000 staff, delivering education and training to approximately 70,000 learners in 650 locations through a network of schools, colleges, centres, outreach, and community-based settings in the DDLETB region.

The SER illustrates that further education and training (FET) in DDLETB is responsible for delivering a range of full-time, part-time and online programmes to a diverse range of learners. The FET budget is circa €75m annually. In 2019, there were 21,074 learners participating in FET across the region. Due to the Covid-19 pandemic, there was a decline in learners participating in FET programmes in 2020 and 2021. However, the anticipated learner numbers for 2022 are close to those achieved in 2019.

The FET sector in DDLETB consists of four services located in 40 centres, each with its own distinct identity and target learner groups. This includes four geographically based adult education services, five dedicated further education colleges, six further education centres located in post-primary schools known as dual provision schools, three training centres located in Baldoyle, Tallaght and Loughlinstown, and 11 Youthreach centres. The training centres also support external providers contracted by DDLETB to provide education and training, including three community training centres

(CTCs), five specialist training providers (STPs), three justice workshops and seven local training initiatives (LTIs) delivered in the community. DDLETB also provides a range of services through arrangements with other organisations, grants and other initiatives.

Figure 1 - DDLETB Map of Provision and Services¹



DDLETB serves three separate administrative areas, namely Dún Laoghaire-Rathdown, Fingal and South County Dublin County Councils. These county councils are among the largest in the country and range in population from 296,020 in Fingal, to South County Dublin with a population over 278,767, and Dún Laoghaire-Rathdown with a population of over 218,018² (SER, p. 14).

¹ DDLETB Inaugural Review: CEO Briefing for QQI Panel (April/May 2022), p 3

² <https://www.cso.ie/en/releasesandpublications/ep/p-rsdgi/regionalsdgsireland2017/nt>



Section

2

Self-evaluation Methodology

Section 2: Self-evaluation Methodology

During the main review visit, the review team noted from ETB FET staff that Dublin Dún Laoghaire ETB (DDLETB) began their review process in April 2021 with the establishment of the Inaugural Review Steering Group (IRSG). Data collection began in August 2021 and during the compilation of the self-evaluation report (SER), DDLETB also referenced some additional surveys taken between 2019 and 2021 in the SER. The SER states that the IRSG was chaired by the Director of Further Education and Training and consisted of 20 members:

- The Quality Assurance Manager, DDLETB
- Inaugural review coordinator, QA Unit
- Representatives of the Strategy and Planning Unit
- Representative of training centres
- Representatives of further education colleges
- Representative of the Operational Services Division
- Representatives from adult education, further education and Youthreach
- Representative of technology enhanced learning (TEL)
- A guidance counsellor
- A representative of teachers/Instructors
- An external representative
- A learner representative.

During the main review visit, the review team heard that data was gathered from FET staff surveys, and surveys and focus groups were arranged with a range of external stakeholders. Focus groups were formed to analyse the data gathered.

The SER process was conducted during the Covid-19 pandemic. The review team acknowledges that this was challenging for DDLETB. Despite that, it was evident to the review team that there was a strong commitment from DDLETB FET staff to the review process. Throughout the SER, references are made to the desire to 'have the learner at the heart of everything we do' and it was clear to the review team during the main review visit that this was the case. The process of compiling the SER is recognised to be a good learning experience for DDLETB, giving the senior management team an opportunity to reflect on what was going well and where improvements can be made.

The review team noted the complexity of DDLETB as an organisation. The ETB was formed following the amalgamation of the County Dublin Vocational Education Committee (VEC) and the Dún Laoghaire VEC and three former FÁS training centres (Baldoyle, Loughlinstown and Tallaght), which transferred initially to SOLAS. The review team acknowledges that there can be some inconsistencies in processes during the integration period. However, in compiling the SER, the inconsistencies have been highlighted by the ETB and actions are being taken to address these. The review team learnt from staff of an ETB initiative to resolve any inconsistencies across the provision and centres. The initiative was to establish communities of practice (CoPs) involving managers and teaching staff coming together to share ideas around teaching, learning and assessment.

During the main review visit, the review team heard, initially from staff and then confirmed by management, about the use of CoPs as a method for cooperating between centres and between DDLETB and its stakeholders. This method was also noted in the SER (p. 49). The review team acknowledges the value of the establishment of CoPs and that they can serve as a platform for staff to share best practice in QA. The review team finds that this is an excellent example of how DDLETB is developing a quality culture.

It is clear to the review team that the SER provides a comprehensive evaluation of quality assurance at DDLETB and that the case studies in the report provide good illustrations of the activities of the ETB. The review team initially had some concern that surveys were being over-used, resulting in 'survey fatigue' for learners and staff. However, during the main review visit, learners informed the review team that they did not find that they were being surveyed too much, with some stating they had not been surveyed. The review team found that it was unclear in the SER how data gathered in surveys was acted upon. This, and the overgeneration of data, was explored with staff during the main review visit and is discussed in Section 3, Information and Data Management, of this report.

The review team noted the possibility for duplication and blurred lines when it came to the role of the Quality Committee and the role of the Quality Council. It is acknowledged that while there have been attempts by DDLETB to clarify these roles, there is still work to be done here. During the main review visit, the review team heard from staff that DDLETB has conducted an external review of their governance structure. DDLETB has indicated that any recommendations will be actioned and implemented alongside the action plan in response to this review report. The review team is of the opinion that DDLETB conducting reviews of its governance demonstrates its proactive attitude towards learning. The review team notes that while areas for improvement were identified, the SER's overall very positive review of the ETB could perhaps indicate a missed opportunity for deeper self-analysis and critical reflection. The review team is of the opinion that the inclusion of dissenting or different views in the SER is a great source of learning. During the main review visit, some staff

members identified to the review team areas for improvement that were not captured in the SER, though the review team acknowledges priorities need to be determined in developing the SER.

The self-evaluation process has highlighted that the ETB's quality assurance guidelines and processes are enhancement-focused and include examples where improvements have been made and also where improvement is required. The review team is of the view that it is important to prioritise these improvements, based on the vision, mission, strategy and risk appetite of the ETB, as well as the impact of the improvements. The review team considers that leadership in DDLETB has a key role to play. Communication and the integration of actions across FET services is vital. It is important to empower the management and staff of the various centres to lead and manage these enhancements.

Commendation

- The review team commends DDLETB for engaging with a wide range of staff, learners and stakeholders in the SER process, despite the challenging circumstances of Covid-19 forcing the SER to be created mostly online.

Recommendation

- The review team recommends that DDLETB create a strategy that identifies and prioritises areas for improvement. For example, the development of a strategic and compliance framework which is risk-based to help DDLETB prioritise their strategic goals and fulfil their mission. The review team is of the view that by actively seeking constructive feedback from its stakeholders, the ETB could benefit from improved QA enhancement management processes.



Section

3

**Quality Assurance &
Enhancement**

Section 3: Quality Assurance & Enhancement

Objective 1: Governance and Management of Quality

ETB Mission & Strategy

According to SER documentation and DDLETB's Statement of Strategy (2017-2021), DDLETB's mission is: To provide a wide range of high-quality education and training programmes, services and supports to children, young people and adults across the DDLETB region and a high-quality experience for learners.

During the main review visit, the review team heard from FET staff of DDLETB's desire to achieve and sustain outstanding results that meet and exceed the expectations of its stakeholders. The review team had a strong sense of DDLETB's inspiring goal to create the best learning environment for learners by investing in quality enhancement. This can be further enhanced in the next iteration of the new statement of strategy by creating a vision that is aspirational and by creating a strategy that is centred on enhancing sustainable value and further developing their quality culture.

The review team notes the five-year strategy used by DDLETB to plan their operations. The mission of the ETB is stated in the SER. However, having met with staff and management, the review team felt that the vision, purpose or 'why' of DDLETB was not shared across the organisation, nor did it feed clearly into the strategy of DDLETB. The SER does highlight some of the key future challenges facing the ETB such as population growth, diversity, unemployment and skills shortages. This was explored with the senior management of DDLETB during the main review visit, and the review team felt that some work is required in creating and communicating DDLETB's vision for the future and that this would be extremely beneficial to all of DDLETB's stakeholders.

The review team is of the belief that staff taking responsibility for their role should be an integrated and natural aspect of being part of DDLETB. The provision of training for leadership to staff is a start, and the review team noted that 40 leaders participated in a Leadership Development Programme. However, the review team considers it also important to ensure that skills newly acquired from training are applied in the workplace. The review team did not review formal evidence of follow-up with course participants but considers this an important component for all internal training that should go beyond surveying participants to measure their reactions to the course.

As noted in Section 2 of this report, DDLETB was formed through a merger of several different organisations. The ETB continues to deal with legacy issues such as the presence of elements from different QA systems. The SER states that an objective of the ETB is to establish a common QA system that is robust. However, the review team questions what robust actually means to DDLETB. Does it mean more regulations or the adoption of QA best practice by all DDLETB FET staff in their day-to-day procedures? The review team acknowledges that work is continuing on compiling a quality handbook and encourages DDLETB to enable their FET staff to empowerment rather than controlling the drive to a quality culture.

During meetings with staff, the review team got a strong sense that DDLETB strives to be a quality driven organisation based on a quality culture. The review team is of the opinion that the ETB's governance and the QA system should be reassessed and renewed in order to reach this goal. The first step in this reassessment have been taken through the SER review of governance. During the main review visit, the review team met with ETB representatives who are striving for quality but who feel that they are not always facilitated by the (governance) system. The review team heard that feedback is given to DDLETB and although many surveys are conducted it was not always clear to the review team if the information is being systematically collected, what happens when data is gathered and how feedback is systematically acted upon. The review team is of the view that this is an important part of embedding a culture of continuous improvement in DDLETB.

Strategy

The review team heard that DDLETB's Further Education and Training (FET) services have been guided in their activities by its Statement of Strategy (2017-2021) which outlines the organisation's mission and strategic goals. The review team examined the strategy that was, as heard during the main review visit, developed following extensive consultation with internal and external stakeholders including managers from across all DDLETB's FET services.

This Statement of Strategy outlined four strategic goals, with a number of strategic priorities to support each of those goals as outlined in Table 4.1 in the SER (p. 42).

Figure 2 - DDLETB strategic goals and priorities³

Strategic Goals	Strategic Priorities
High quality education and training programmes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> > Excellent teaching and learning for all > Quality assured provision with high levels of achievement and accreditation by learners > Evidence-based planning, co-ordination and review > Relevant, responsive, integrated and innovative programmes and initiatives > Reflective practice to support improvement and sharing of knowledge, skills and resources
High quality experience for learners	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> > Positive learning experiences and environments with suitable resources and premises > Relevant knowledge and skills for lifelong learning, personal development, progression and employment > Commitment to technology-enhanced learning to support independent and collaborative learning > Feedback to and from learners and parents > Equality and active social inclusion
Organisational and staff development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> > Identity as a leading provider and culture of innovation and improvement > Ethical governance to ensure accountability and value for money > Capacity building for active leadership > Staff support, continuing professional and career development
Effective communication and collaboration	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> > Enhanced internal and external communication systems > Strategic networking and partnerships with key stakeholders

³ DDLETB Self-evaluation Report (SER, p. 42).

The review team heard during meetings with senior management and noted in documents provided by DDLETB about the next strategic planning period, that 50 strategic actions in the statement of strategy were based on the core values of equality, professionalism, integrity, collaboration and innovation. The review team were informed that 80% of the actions have been fully actioned and the Senior Management Team (SMT) are commended by the review team for this achievement during a pandemic.

New Strategic Period: 2022-2026

The review team acknowledges that the strategy for 2017-2021 was still in force when the SER process was initiated. The review team is of the view that the first steps in shaping a new strategy is to conduct a robust review of the previous strategy. While acknowledging that such a review has taken place, the review team suggests that DDLETB consider what, if anything, can be included in the new document that is not in the current document. For example:

- What elements of learners' feedback needs to be addressed at a more strategic level?
- What capital investment needs to be made?
- What investment needs to be made in modernising equipment?
- How can DDLETB consider innovative and cost-effective ways to modernise equipment and materials required for apprenticeships, e.g., cars, electrical equipment?

Because DDLETB recognises the importance of input from internal and external stakeholders, the ETB has started a process to create a new strategy and provided to the review team the first outline in advance of the main review visit.

Figure 3 - DDLETB Previous and Emerging Strategic Themes⁴



The review team noted from the SER that DDLETB's strategic priorities are guided by government policy and national strategies. The SER also describes the external QA requirements DDLETB has to meet for organisations such as QQI, SOLAS and Higher Education Institutions (HEIs).

The review team heard from DDLETB's SMT that a robust quality assurance system is required to ensure DDLETB continues to fulfil its current and future mission and strategy in an ever-changing environment. Senior managers confirmed to the review team, during the main review visit, their firm commitment to continued investment in governance and quality assurance that fosters a quality culture across FET and that this will remain a key priority for DDLETB.

The SER (pp. 18-19) illustrates the key challenges recognised by DDLETB such as offering support to individual learners so that they can fulfil their potential and dealing with the varied educational needs of a very diverse population. In addition, the following future challenges as identified by ETB FET staff to the review team should inform any future strategy and implementation plan:

- the population is expanding in different areas at different rates
- unemployment is an issue in areas with high levels of disadvantage
- diversity of needs, such as learners born overseas and learners with disabilities, is above the national average

⁴ DDLETB Inaugural Review: CEO Briefing for QQI Panel (April/May 2022), p.14

- due to Covid-19 many people struggle with mental health problems. DDLETB has to find a way to offer education and support to people who need specific support. Cooperation with mental health, other services and finding unusual ways to 'use' education to give people a healthy future is a challenge
- the labour market has problems in sourcing skilled employees
- those at risk of redundancy need to upskill and reskill in digitalisation
- sustainability.

Recommendation

- The review team recommends that DDLETB continue developing a single, standardised quality assurance system for all its provision in the next academic year.

Structures and Terms of Reference for the Governance and Management of Quality Assurance

The review team found evidence that DDLETB has a very structured and extensive QA governance system. This includes a Quality Council, Quality Committee, Course Approval Committee (CAC), Programmes Committee and other subcommittees working on QA and governance of QA at different levels and parts of the organisation. Terms of reference have been defined and published, and subcommittees report to councils or committees with formal terms of reference. All councils and committees consist of members from all FET centres and colleges along with representation from the QA Unit and other head office staff as appropriate. The DDLETB quality governance system transcends management hierarchy. It allows individuals who are actively involved in developing programmes, teaching and training, assessing learners, engaging with community bodies and employers, to be involved in assuring that these activities are taking place in an effective quality assurance system that promotes continuous improvement. The review team is of the opinion that the current membership of DDLETB's governance system has done well to bring representatives from all areas of its FET services together.

Since DDLETB strives to have the learner at the heart of everything it does, the review team considers the absence of learner representation on its governance groups to be problematic. It increases the importance of establishing how the learner perspective is being represented in decision making.

DDLETB's governance structure applies a division of responsibility between development (execution) and approval. This separation has been enforced by internal and external verification of results, programme approval by the Course Approval Committee and the Programmes Committee where the content of DDLETB's programmes is approved.

The review team heard that DDLETB has a predominantly instrumental approach towards quality assurance, with the QA Unit at the centre of this framework. In addition to the formal QA structure, DDLETB has started working with communities of practice and informal (for example further education) networks to promote more collaboration to improve its performance. This approach has resulted in formalised support for the roll-out of the Levels 5 and 6 Early Learning and Care programmes both within DDLETB and across all of the ETBs, and in realising the SER.

Conducting periodic surveys with learners, staff, employers and other stakeholders is embedded in DDLETB's QA system. Sections within the organisation are consistently being reviewed or monitored

to ensure requirements are being met. However, during the main review visit, learners and staff confirmed to the review team that some programmes offered by DDLETB are outdated and urgently need to be overhauled.

DDLETB has started to integrate legacy systems into one QA (governance) handbook which ensures cross-organisational QA procedures are maintained. Training centre staff and QA staff informed the review team that they are pleased with the brand new DDLETB procedures for internal verification (IV), external authentication (EA) and results approval panel (RAP).

DDLETB's QA governance is strongly oriented towards accountability to external stakeholders. However, the review team is of the opinion that it needs to be further developed to support the mission, vision and ambitions of DDLETB and align with the organisation's risk management.

The review team recognises that DDLETB is accountable to many external stakeholders. However, the review team encourages DDLETB to consider how it can work with these stakeholders to reduce the many diagnostic control systems used and the data that these systems generate.

Whilst monitoring several key performance indicators (KPIs) is of great value, the review team is of the view that an overburdened governance structure with handbooks, procedures and formats can be counterproductive when attempting to move towards a quality culture with personal leadership, ownership and responsibility.

The review team suggests that DDLETB increase the alignment between strategy, risk management and QA management in order to increase the effectiveness of the QA governance system. DDLETB should ensure that quality assurance work is organised as simply and efficiently as possible, and that key quality criteria and goals are understood and used by all internal and external stakeholders. It would be helpful to limit QA for external purposes to what is required by external stakeholders and try to integrate these requirements into those needed to improve DDLETB performance.

The review team advises that DDLETB make the governance of quality assurance more relevant and increase the intrinsic motivation of teaching staff. The ETB should monitor and publish results that appeal to more employees, learners and stakeholders in the community, including more qualitative data (testimonials, success stories, community involvement) in reports on quality assurance. The most important result is the change in people's lives that followed from being enrolled in a course in

DDLETB. DDLETB should highlight this and continue delivering programmes that enable people to change their lives.

One of the things that came across to the review team during the main review visit was the loyalty of the staff and their commitment to DDLETB. While, of course, this is to be commended, it is not without risk. As a professional organisation DDLETB can continue to implement systematic opportunities that enable employees to give input in a positive critical way to help the organisation in realising their strategic goals by using and continuing to enhance the quality culture of DDLETB.

Commendations

- The review team commends DDLETB and has been impressed to see that learners and staff at all levels are aware and involved in closing the quality cycle on an annual basis. The review team met with many who were highly involved in delivering higher quality for learners and employers and communicated to the review team that they appreciate the added value of periodic reviews and evaluations of their provision.
- The review team commends DDLETB for ensuring balanced decision making is improved by making sure that all QA governance bodies in DDLETB consist of members who represent different areas within DDLETB.
- The review team commends DDLETB for having brought together legacy issues and innovative new QA practices to enhance their quality provision and monitoring.

Recommendation

- The review team recommends that DDLETB implement the recommendations identified in the external review of Quality Governance by O'Brien Governance Design (OBGD). The relaunching of the different governance roles is necessary in the next phase of development of the QA system. Expanding the role and organising the view of learners is recommended by the review team.

Documentation of Quality Assurance

The review team heard that Covid-19 restrictions forced DDLETB to move from quality assurance and procedures in paper handbooks to online methodology. The QA Unit has supported DDLETB and enabled the organisation to maintain its QA over the past two years. The review team heard during the main review visit that SharePoint was used for this purpose. During meetings with staff, and from the SER, the review team learned that DDLETB is in the process of integrating their QA procedures from legacy agreements and systems. This includes the development of shared internal verification

(IV), external authentication (EA) and results approval panel (RAP) procedures for all FET services. Some parts of the QA handbook have been integrated, others are on the 'to-do' list or are a work in progress. However, it is unclear to the review team how DDLETB prioritises the areas in which short term integration is necessary. The review team encourages DDLETB to develop and implement a policy review schedule that ensures that all policies are not being reviewed at the same time and ensures everyone involved in quality assurance is aware of the schedule.

The review team suggests that DDLETB ensure that documentation is designed and presented with universal design for learning (UDL) principles applied, enabling the majority of stakeholders to easily read and understand.

As conveyed by staff during the main review visit, the review team notes the high volume of quality assurance documentation in DDLETB. It is apparent to the review team that FET staff make good use of the provided documentation. One staff member commented, "external developments serve as inspiration. It is fantastic and very reassuring to know that we are supported in our development of quality assurance processes."

Staff confirmed that communicating with the QA Unit has been beneficial and has opened up new ways of doing things while monitoring development and progression paths for learners.

The QA Unit maintains an audit log of any QA-related incidents which could adversely impact on the quality of programme delivery.

Commendations

- The review team commends DDLETB for the development of shared internal verification (IV), external authentication (EA) and results approval panel (RAP) procedures for all FET services. The review team considers this to have been a wonderful journey with an excellent result. This successful development should be used as a blueprint for other projects where the integration of QA procedures is required.
- The review team commends DDLETB's centre management for starting to move from maintaining differences between the centres to sharing good practices and policies, implementing them across the centres and collaborating to solve problems.

Recommendation

- The review team recommends that DDLETB create a QA handbook that focuses on specific elements, including:
 - the standardisation and consistency of practice and documentation around annual monitoring and gathering data, including information relating to drop out rates, in order to work efficiently on attaining improvement for learners based on evidence presented by research and analyses
 - investment in quality culture (based on professionalism, leadership and ownership) using communities of practice (CoPs) and other methods to address issues experienced across the organisation. This will stimulate the professionalism and ownership of people involved, including learners.
 - seeking the balance between diversity (the different centres and activities) and standardisation
 - a policy review schedule that ensures that all policies are not being reviewed at the same time and that everyone involved in quality assurance is aware of the schedule
 - an accessible, easily read, simplified reporting system for all internal verification (IV), external authentication (EA) and results approvals panel (RAP) processes and procedure
 - policy and processes on assessment. The review team recommends that DDLETB identify and review outdated Assessment Instrument Specifications (AIS)
 - a systematic internal review process whereby programmes that require updating can be identified within a periodic review cycle

Staff Recruitment, Management and Development

During the main review visit, the review team noted from their meeting with staff that DDLETB's HR function is responsible for the recruitment and selection process and employs best practice in recruitment, e.g., structured competency-based interviews. There is a centralised induction process for teaching staff. However, this practice does not extend to other FET staff, and it is recognised by DDLETB FET staff and management that this should be introduced.

The review team noted that, given the diversity of the learner population served by DDLETB, it would be beneficial to see this diversity reflected in its staff. The review team heard that there are currently no specific plans to address this beyond adhering to the Employment Equality Acts (1998–2015) which bans discrimination on nine grounds. Diversity was discussed in terms of staff with additional needs only, as this must be reported to the relevant government department.

During the main review visit, it was evident to the review team that continuing professional development (CPD) is provided for all staff and that they are made aware they can avail of CPD. However, the review team noted from discussions with support and administrative staff that central records are not kept of the CPD staff have undertaken. It was stated that this is discussed at staff reviews. However, it was not clear if CPD was discussed at all staff reviews or if the practice of discussing CPD at annual reviews was consistent across the ETB. The review team encourages the use of a technology tool such as MS Forms to ask teaching staff to self-report on what CPD they undertake annually. This could then feed into a database and record their CPD without having to resource a central administrator. The review team is of the view that this would help to identify those staff who have not availed of CPD. While CPD is desirable for all staff, it is particularly important for teaching staff.

The review team noted a heavily audited environment with a strong emphasis on controls. This is due to the nature of the organisation which is a state funded body with high levels of accountability required from it by government departments and agencies. Annual audits are a legislative requirement.

The idea of quality culture and trust was raised by the review team with the OSD regarding employing the right staff with expertise and trusting them to do the job. The review team observed that the OSD's focus was on trust being measured by controls, or 'trust but verify', specifically by means of IT.

The review team considered there would be great benefit to DDLETB in creating internships or work placements within the ETB for diverse groups who experience barriers in accessing further and higher education employment, as part of an inclusion drive. In addition, the team also felt there is a need for a mental health and wellness focus for staff following on from the effects of the Covid-19 pandemic and the move to remote teaching and learning. Requests for access to reasonable accommodations and psychological support are due to increase and DDLETB can plan ahead to facilitate the increased demand.

Commendation

- The review team commends DDLETB for making a wide range of continuing professional development (CPD) opportunities available to staff. As an education provider, this is an important initiative.

Recommendation

- The review team recommends that, while it is always appropriate to recruit the most qualified candidate, DDLETB also develop a diversity and inclusion agenda to be introduced into the current recruitment and selection process to reflect the diversity of the learner population.

Programme Development, Approval and Submission for Validation

The review team found an ardent desire and commitment among DDLETB's Senior Management Team (SMT), and college and centre staff, that all programmes and their delivery should be relevant to the needs of learners, industry and the wider community.

For DDLETB programmes that lead to common awards system (CAS), the review team heard that there is a much-prescribed QQI validation process and criteria that must be followed for the development or updating of programmes.

During the main review visit, the review team heard from ETB FET staff that a fully developed and functioning quality assurance system has been put in place that governs its FET provision. Within this governance system, DDLETB's Quality Council has overall oversight of quality assurance (QA) across all FET services, encompassing programme design, development, approval, and submission for validation.

The Quality Council delegates operational QA activities with regard to programme development, approval, and validation to several internal institutional fora and subgroups namely the:

- Course Approvals Committee
- Programmes Committee
- Programmes Development Working Group
- Assessment Development Group

Staff confirmed these committees are part of the ETB's governance for programme development that assures all QQI validation policies and criteria are met in full.

As outlined in the SER and confirmed during the review visit, any proposed programme development must apply to the Programmes Committee with a business case. All initial applications are assessed and must demonstrate how the proposal meets the ETB's institutional strategic goals, and local and regional need. Once approved by the Programmes Committee, a programme development working group is established that consists of subject and curriculum development experts.

The role of this group is to write the curriculum, assessment, teaching and learning strategies as well as benchmarking and consulting with employers, learners and professional bodies to ensure the programme is contemporary with regards to content. It is also the responsibility of this group to produce all the validation documentation that is internally reviewed and approved by the Programmes Committee and submitted to QQI for validation.

During discussions with ETB managers and teaching staff regarding the programme approval process, it was highlighted to the review team that there is a need to review teaching and assessment strategies further due to Covid-19. Staff confirmed learners' needs had changed in this regard and require a blended approach to their learning. During the main review visit, meetings held with learners and employers also confirmed the need for new pedagogical methodologies that provide greater flexibility for learning. The review team encourages DDLETB to embed blended teaching, learning and assessment approaches into DDLETB programmes where appropriate within the curriculum review and validation processes.

The review team learnt during the main review visit of several recent exciting and innovative curriculum developments where the ETB's internal QA approval and programme development procedures were used and fully met QQI validation and policy expectations.

The first of these was the development of a Level 6 minor award in Garden and Parks Supervision and the second was the development of two new major awards in Early Learning and Care at levels 5 and 6. The development of the Levels 5 and 6 awards in Early Learning and Care was a national pilot initiative that involved all 16 ETBs and was led by key curriculum and quality staff in DDLETB. This successful collaborative programme development and validation review enabled DDLETB's well embedded QA and governance structures to come to the fore and successfully establish a QQI recognised partnership network in Early Learning and Care Curriculum.

The review team considers this to be an example of good practice and of a quality culture-driven approach using communities of practice, worth pursuing in other curricular areas. It was also noted by the review team that because of the development of the Early Learning and Care programme and associated QA structures put in place to support this, DDLETB is well placed to engage with QQI regarding the achievement of devolved responsibility, an important strategic objective for the future.

In DDLETB training centres, Assessment Instrument Specifications (AISs) are used for the assessment of modules within programmes to ensure training and teaching consistency and parity of the learner experience.

It is the responsibility of ETB centres to update these assessment specifications, and this is led by an assessment development group who reports on QA matters such as programme development or amendments to the Programmes Committee. All FET services that propose new courses are also required to submit their proposals for approval to the course approval committee (CAC). At the time of the main review visit, the review team heard from class representatives who felt the content of their training course and assessments was outdated in terms of the knowledge, skills, and practice required in industry. This issue was prominent in some of the craft apprenticeship programmes which have been developed by SOLAS, who are the coordinating provider for apprenticeships. The review team raised learner concerns with staff who acknowledged that the updating of some programmes by SOLAS is required.

DDLETB FET staff also explained that DDLETB was formed in 2013 through a merger of two VECs and the subsequent integration of three FÁS training centres that were initially transferred to SOLAS and then amalgamated into the ETB in 2014. This meant that the newly formed ETB inherited a portfolio of validated programmes that may be outdated in some cases. The review team strongly suggests that DDLETB identify all FÁS legacy programmes that require updating and progress as a matter of urgency, in addition to continuing to review and update its programmes to ensure they are current and up to date.

DDLETB FET staff emphasised that every effort is made to ensure that existing courses are innovative and are continually being updated to meet the needs of learners, employers, industry, and other external stakeholders. Training centre and Quality Unit staff confirmed to the review team that to date in 2021-2022 there have been 63 new or revised assessment specifications and this work is continuing. The review team considers this work to require continued urgent action in collaboration with SOLAS.

During the main review visit, the team noted the high level of engagement with employers in key areas such as curriculum design, course delivery such as apprenticeships, work-based learning, and meeting employer training needs. This was evidenced in the SER, SER case studies, and meetings with DDLETB's FET staff, learners, sector skills and industry representatives.

Commendation

- The review team commends DDLETB and encourages the ETB to promote the Levels 5 and 6 major awards in Early Learning and Care and the establishment of a partnership network, using communities of practice (CoPs) as a working method and model of good practice in curriculum design and QA processes and expand this to other appropriate curricular areas.

Recommendations

- The review team recommends that DDLETB continue to review and update its programmes and to ensure they are current and up to date. Planning schedules can be part of the QA Handbook. The review team recommends that DDLETB identify all FÁS Legacy programmes that require updating and progress as a matter of urgency.
- The review team recommends that DDLETB use communities of practice as a working method and model of good practice in curriculum design and QA processes and expand this to other appropriate curricular areas. A more holistic approach should be taken in course development, involving industry experts, external authenticators, prospective learners and tutors in order to ensure a complete learning programme where the learner's needs can be fully met so that the learner become a highly employable member of the labour force.

Access, Transfer and Progression

During the main review visit, the review team noted that learners were all very clear on their options when finishing a course. Having spoken with employers, higher education (HE) representatives and learners, it is clear to the review team that learners are well prepared for progression to their chosen next steps.

Learners who progressed to further and higher education were seen by representatives from further and higher education as very committed and highly motivated, and the role of DDLETB was acknowledged as playing a part in this. During the main review visit, the review team heard from teaching staff and alumni that learners tended to succeed as well as, or slightly better than, the learners coming to HE from more traditional routes.

The extent to which learners' confidence in their ability to succeed has improved was apparent to the review team. At times, learners became quite emotional when discussing the life-changing impact of their experience with DDLETB, and the members of the review team were moved by the work of DDLETB. It was acknowledged by DDLETB's quality team and learners, and the review team, that further work needs to be done in the area of recognition of prior learning (RPL) as this would make a significant difference for those who have considerable work experience. RPL would encourage more participation from those who have amassed knowledge throughout their lives and increase their career prospects. The review team notes there is a strong focus on equality in DDLETB, and on assisting those that are furthest from the mainstream school system or who have been let down by that system.

The review team considers there could be a benefit to expanding the alternate methods of communication to enable access, transfer and progression for marginalised minority groups. Similarly, a standard DDLETB-wide learner handbook with easy-to-read routes to access, transfer and progression would be very beneficial for marginalised learners. The review team heard from Level 3-5 learners and providers that the current multiple methods may not cover every target audience. There could be a benefit to creating more accessible avenues referred to during the review such as 'Bring a friend', community outreach to people with a disability or specific invites to minority ethnic groups. Similar activities, on hold due to Covid-19, are outlined below in 'Public Information and Communication'.

The review team encourages DDLETB to capture qualitative data from learners who have progressed to further and higher education or employment. This evidence of development outcomes told from learners' perspectives could be an opportunity to promote the great work of DDLETB.

Commendation

- The review team commends the commitment of DDLETB FET staff in preparing learners for their next steps, either in employment or further education. The FET provision is noted for being flexible and including options for a variety of diverse learners. The team also commends DDLETB for offering many supports to learners to enable them to transfer and progress across DDLETB, into HE and employment.

Recommendation

- The review team recommends that work needs to be done to increase recognition of prior learning (RPL) so that opportunities are opened up for those who have built up on-the-job experience and to create a more accessible learning environment. It is important to acknowledge the importance of Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) when accepting individuals who have gone through the application process with no prior certified or accepted learning background.

Integrity and Approval of Learner Results

To ensure the integrity of learners' results and learning experience, the review team heard that DDLETB has a two-step authentication process including internal verifiers (IV) and external authenticators (EA), some of whom are industry professionals. The internal verifier is responsible for checking and verifying the marks, and then compiling the results. The external authenticator confirms fair and consistent assessment in accordance with the programme outcomes and requirements. The review team finds the information around QA processes is transparent and helpful to learners and staff.

During the main review visit, learners told the review team about the feedback they receive from staff members. The review team was given a transparent description of the process, which included staff taking the time to manage the expectations of learners and explain the decision-making process in accessible, easy to understand terms. This was especially evident with Youthreach learners, who told the review team that this communication made them feel at the heart of things.

The review team, during meetings with staff and learners, was impressed with DDLETB's Youthreach programme. This programme is co-funded by the Government and the European Social Fund and is used to target early school leavers between the ages of 16 and 20. The review team learnt that many Youthreach programmes lead to QQI awards and offer a wide range of educational opportunities for young people who have special educational needs (SEN).

Youthreach learners whom the review team met described how their programmes in the ETB provided them with a second chance as school did not suit them. Learners stated that they received tremendous support from their tutors and support staff in the ETB. The entire review team was very touched by the work of ETB Youthreach staff which frequently leads to life-changing opportunities for many young people who have opted out of mainstream education.

The review team heard that DDLETB developed alternative methods of assessment when Covid-19 restrictions prevented standard work-based learning (WBL) practice. The review team encourages the ETB to continue to build on their achievement in creating alternative assessments.

Commendations

- The review team commends DDLETB's commitment to a fair and equal assessment process for its learners, and to continual improvement of assessment methods that support the integrity of the results learners achieve.
- The review team commends DDLETB's work with Youthreach. The entire review team were very touched by the work of ETB Youthreach that frequently leads to life-changing opportunities for many young people who have opted out of mainstream education.
- The review team commends DDLETB for the way it addressed the challenges of Covid-19 restrictions by moving quickly to a remote teaching and assessment methodology and resolving issues by engaging with all stakeholders.

Information and Data Management

It was evident to the review team that DDLETB has a great deal of data at its disposal. Some data is gathered from national databases, but DDLETB also gathers data from its own surveys, audits and business processes. During the main review visit, the review team heard that DDLETB is becoming more mature in data management and that creating relevant information from all the available data is a work in progress.

The review team notes from the SER and discussions with management and quality staff that most of the data available is related to DDLETB's past performance. Staff confirmed to the review team that having a large number of key performance indicators (KPIs) increases the challenge for DDLETB management when trying to improve performance in relation to indicators, learner experience and employer satisfaction. For many internal indicators, no targets have been defined to determine whether DDLETB has achieved its goals. All indicators are treated as equally important. However, the review team felt that these could be placed in order of priority and monitored through a risk and impact analysis.

From an IT perspective, DDLETB has the necessary safeguards in place. Every centre has a lead IT engineer assigned to it. The review team is of the opinion that IT service is directed towards supporting the learner experience, in compliance with GDPR guidelines. The 16 ETBs in Ireland work closely together to limit cybersecurity risks.

Commendation

- The review team commends DDLETB for having invested, along with SOLAS and QQI, in generating a large amount of data that can be relevant to the strategy and daily operations of DDLETB. Steps are being made to generate more focused and constructive information, to improve data-supported decision-making.

Recommendation

- The review team recommends that DDLETB develop a set of key performance indicators (KPIs), perhaps in collaboration with other ETBs, for each of the services provided. Indicators can be motivating for all involved, including instructors and learners. At a local level, these indicators can be linked to risk assessment and strong leadership. The review team recommends that DDLETB set targets on essential indicators at corporate management level, to limit the number of indicators that need to be managed at each organisational level.

Public Information and Communication

QQI Core QA Guidelines indicate that there should be policies and procedure in place to ensure that published information is accurate, up-to-date and easily accessible. It is also expected that quality assurance policies and procedures will be published. The review process has demonstrated that there is good public information available about the courses and services that DDLETB provides. There is centre-level oversight of how that information is communicated and a DDLETB social media working group has been established which will provide further guidelines. During the main review visit, the review team heard that DDLETB's website, which will provide public access to QA policies and procedures, is currently under re-development. The review team considers that work on this site needs to be finalised as a matter of urgency to allow QA policies and procedures be published as they develop.

During sessions with learners, the review team heard that it was easy to access information as needed and learners were very pleased with their communication with teaching staff. HEIs, employers and second providers also confirmed their positive experiences of communication with DDLETB.

DDLETB is working on including a social media policy and strategy in their corporate communications framework (SER, p. 119), as corporate communication increasingly relies on social media.

The review team heard during the main review visit that DDLETB is aware of some potential learners lacking IT knowledge or skills.

The ETB has sought, and continues to seek, ways to reach out to these groups. DDLETB is conscious of the digital divide (SER, p. 118) in terms of ability to access information. Other methods of engagement are also employed by the ETB, including:

- coffee mornings
- information days and
- 'Bring a friend' events

However, these have been on hold due to Covid-19. DDLETB hopes to revisit these methods to ensure they are reaching as many prospective learners as possible.

The review team strongly encourages DDLETB to ensure its websites are accessible and meet web accessibility standards. This should extend to internal and external websites. The review team

acknowledges DDLETB for collating all course information on the Further Education and Training Course Hub (FETCH) website.

The review team is of the opinion that DDLETB should use its corporate communication policy and social media policy and strategy to increase awareness about why DDLETB is communicating its messages amongst their stakeholders, to increase the effectiveness of corporate communication text in the well-functioning (friendly, informative and clear) individual communications with its stakeholders.

The review team is of the opinion that the most important result from provision is the change in people's lives that followed from being enrolled in a course in DDLETB. DDLETB should highlight that and continue delivering programmes that enable people to change their lives, using qualitative data from learners who have progressed to further and higher education or employment. This evidence of development outcomes told from learners' perspectives could be an opportunity to promote the great work of DDLETB. A diversity of communication methods should be expanded for those groups who cannot access information online and are at risk of exclusion due to the digital divide.

Commendation

- The review team commends DDLETB for its open and transparent approach to making information available to the public, internal and external stakeholders. DDLETB has a number of high-quality communications channels on its clear, comprehensive website.

Recommendation

- The review team recommends that DDLETB increase the effectiveness of its communication policy (including media policy) by monitoring and publishing results that appeal to more employers, learners and stakeholders in the community. This should include more qualitative data (testimonials, success stories, community involvement) in reports on quality assurance.

Objective 2: Teaching, Learning & Assessment

The Learning Environment

During the main review visit, it was clear to the review team that teaching staff are dedicated to ensuring the learner is kept at the heart of everything they do. There were areas, however, where they expressed frustration at a lack of resources resulting in being unable to provide the level of support required by learners. Learners, without exception, were extremely complimentary about the teaching and other staff, including staff on reception. The review team heard that it was easy for learners to access the information they required both prior to joining their courses and during their studies

The review team heard dropout rates were high on some courses, often for personal reasons. The review team acknowledges that it can be unsettling for remaining learners when people drop out of courses.

With regard to craft apprenticeships, learners confirmed to the review team that access to Phase 2 training was challenging. There were waiting lists for the 'off the job' phases of apprenticeships, which are managed by SOLAS. This proved difficult during Covid-19. DDLETB is delivering extra classes to facilitate apprentices and to address the residual impact of Covid-19 restrictions (SER, p. 34).

The review team noted during meetings with both staff and learners that some of the equipment used for educational purposes is very outdated, one example was a car that is over 25 years old and electrical equipment that is no longer in use. The review team notes the outdated curricula for the craft apprenticeship which requires learners to have access to older technologies, as well as newer ones. While this is acknowledged to be a challenge, hybrid working with old equipment is not desirable.

It was evident to the review team that learners are incredibly grateful for the opportunities they receive, including the opportunity to return to education, to receive support on their journey to higher education and to develop existing skills or learn new ones. However, these learners also feel let down by the condition of facilities used to accommodate them. The review team heard reports of leaking roofs in certain centres, the majority of which are used for unaccredited courses.

A new state of the art FET centre was opened in Balbriggan in 2019 and another in Swords in 2021, in direct response to demographic demand, government policy and crucially learner, employer need. An added plus is that they will meet SOLAS targets that are essential for bridging the skills gap in supporting the economy.

This narrative was reinforced by the case study in the SER (p. 124) where examples were provided and confirmed in meetings with staff that substantial investment has been made in state-of-the-art FET accommodation in Balbriggan in 2019 and in Swords in 2021. Despite the fact that the review team did not have the opportunity to visit these locations, in most of the team's discussions with the learners who attend these venues for part of their course, the feedback concerning the learner environment is excellent.

To support teaching and learning, all DDLETB training centres providing craft apprenticeship courses at Phase 2 have purpose-built training centres that create real working learning environments for apprentices. These training centres have dedicated workstations for apprentices, with fully equipped workshops that allow apprentices to develop competency in their given trade.

It was made apparent to the review team that, across the ETB, staff and learners have adapted well to the adversity created by the recent pandemic. The use of information and communications technology (ICT) by DDLETB has made some of the courses more accessible to those who may have mobility issues, time constraints, and other variables. The review team noted that many learners have had a negative education experience previously and that their experience with DDLETB has transformed their views, increased their self-efficiency and opened up many new opportunities for them.

A number of learners do not have a background in the Irish education system or have had troubles during their former education. The review team heard from learners about frustrations in some classes because of varying levels of English. The review team is of the view that learners' level of English could be assessed. Through assessment, learners can discover their level, and staff can group learners accordingly to create efficient learning paths.

Moodle and Microsoft Teams are the main platforms used in the ETB by staff and learners, allowing lessons to be streamed, assessments to be carried out and progress tracked.

Commendations

- The review team commends the dedication of DDLETB FET staff and learners to achieving a productive and inclusive learning environment. Throughout the review it was apparent that learners greatly appreciate a learning environment where they are given the chance to learn and increase their career opportunities.
- The review team commends DDLETB for giving FET staff members the opportunity to enhance their IT skills through online training courses in order to cope with the pressure of working from home and interacting with learners.

Recommendation

- The review team recommends that DDLETB implement a standardised assessment of learners' level of English for relevant courses so that all learners can start at a base level and progress simultaneously, making it easier for learners to relate to each other.

Assessment of Learners

As outlined in the 2017-21 Statement of Strategy, DDLETB is committed to delivering a high-quality teaching and learning experience across all its provision. During the main review visit, the review team was made aware by ETB FET staff at all levels that this commitment is realised through robust assessment, quality assurance procedures and practices. These ETB arrangements lead to high levels of achievement and certification for learners.

The review team acknowledges the significant developmental work undertaken by DDLETB in quality assurance of assessment for learners since the 2017 Executive Self-evaluation. Clear policies, procedures and structures that have oversight of assessment practice are now in place, such as the:

- Reasonable Accommodation Handbook
- Assessment Handbook
- Examination Handbook
- Assessment Process Handbook
- Internal Verification Procedure
- External Authentication Procedure
- Results Approval Process
- Covid-19 Contingency Guidelines
- Assessment Development Group
- Course Approval Committee
- Assessment Instrument Specification Template

- Security of Assessment Procedure

DDLETB Further Education Colleges offer Post-Leaving Certificate (PLC) programmes as well as Vocational Training Opportunity Schemes (VTOS) and Apprenticeships. Learners in the FE Colleges are taught and assessed on quality assured courses that enable them to upskill, re-enter the labour market or progress to higher education. In the main, learners are assessed continually on their technical knowledge, core skills and work experience (full-time and part-time).

In the FE colleges, centres, adult education and Youthreach settings, assessments are designed locally in the form of assessment briefs. These briefs are vocationally contextualised and written by course tutors. They are then reviewed by the programme coordinators as part of the internal verification (IV) function.

As part of the assessment design process, learner information about learning outcomes being tested is provided, together with the marking criteria used to measure learner performance and submission deadlines. This information is cited in learner course handbooks and issued at the beginning of the course.

During meetings with ETB FET staff, the review team heard from ETB centre and teaching staff of the assessment workshops that they have attended which were delivered by the QA Unit. They found these to be extremely beneficial in enhancing their assessment writing practice and covered topics such as innovative teaching, learning and assessment methods. Some staff said they would benefit from further support and an overarching institutional quality handbook that would provide more consistent guidance on areas such as assessment.

The ETB training centres offer a wide range of courses that cater for a diverse range of learners, and includes craft apprenticeships. These awards are certified by awarding bodies such as QQI, City and Guilds and Microsoft. It was confirmed to the review team that training centres have a centralised assessment approach through Assessment Instrument Specifications (AIS) and this is managed by the centre Training Standards Officers (TSO). It was noted earlier in this report that AIS are SOLAS legacy assessments that require updating.

During the main review visit, the review team met with a broad range of learners across all levels and provision from DDLETB including alumni. Overall, learners were satisfied with the teaching, learning and assessment experience they received on their programmes. Feedback was positive, and they

spoke highly of how all ETB tutors supported them during their programme and “always went the extra mile for them”.

Learners confirmed to the review team that they had received all the appropriate information regarding their assessment at the beginning of their course, with reminders throughout the year. They also confirmed the assessment feedback they received from tutors was given in a timely manner and was helpful in enabling their learning to develop and improve. During learner meetings, the review team tested with them their awareness of ETB assessment quality assurance procedures. Learners in some cases were able to articulate knowledge of the role of Results Approval Panels (RAPs), Internal Verification (IV) and External Authentication (EA) in their assessment journey.

In reading DDLETB’s SER and in speaking to learners and staff during the main review visit it was evident to the review team that Covid-19 had presented many challenges to assessment as the majority of centres were closed. DDLETB’s SMT responded to this by introducing approved QQI Covid-19 contingency guidelines that enabled the majority of learners to complete their alternative assessments and meet certification deadlines. ETB course teams and learners are to be commended for their response and actions in this regard.

Commendation

- The review team commends DDLETB for its rapid Covid-19 response and implementation of QQI-approved contingency guidelines that enabled learners to successfully complete their alternative assessments and achieve their awards.

Supports for Learners

While DDLETB provided evidence of learner supports in case studies in the SER, it is clear to the review team that availability of mental health supports in some centres is very low and that a more consistent approach to mental health supports for learners is needed. Throughout the main review visit, staff and learners confirmed that some learners were very apprehensive when approaching DDLETB to continue their journey through the education system. In discussions with learners, the review team felt additional investment may be required to ensure that sufficient counselling services for learners are available in the FET centres. It was also disclosed to the review team that the staff currently in charge of guidance counselling are overwhelmed by the numbers of learners who require their help.

Organising peer support as part of the support system can help. DDLETB's student councils and learner forum are a good example of this kind of support in action. Learners are encouraged to raise the concerns about their peers with tutors and other members of staff. There is a high rate of mental health issues across the island of Ireland and by providing these supports, learners can take full advantage of their learning experience.

The review team met with members of DDLETB's psychological support team. Discussions confirmed that resources fall short of demand in the ETB. This has been further impacted by the Covid-19 pandemic. There is an urgent need for a disability support service and an expansion of the psychological support already provided. This can be organised through developing a community of practice that involves all of DDLETB's delivery of programmes, across all levels.

Learners attending apprenticeship courses confirmed to the review team that they were able to avail of instrumental support classes in order to improve their maths and practical skills. These support classes prove invaluable in both the theory and practical sides of their respective courses.

It was also made evident throughout the main review visit that the dedication of staff to their learners was admirable especially throughout the recent Covid-19 pandemic where course directors and supervisors maintained communication with learners in most instances. However, it was noted that some of the centres were not able to maintain contact with learners to provide them with support due to lack of staff. The review team is of the view that learners may benefit from peer bonding exercises. After the testing time of the Covid-19 pandemic, learners may feel isolated and significantly less sociable and become less inclined to open up to the new experiences that DDLETB has to offer.

The review team learned from the SER and from meeting staff and learners that the learner voice is immensely valued in DDLETB. While continuous informal needs identification takes place at centre level to support learner needs, more could be done to capture the needs of the learners and respond effectively and efficiently to them.

The review team met some learners who reported completing one formal, ETB-level survey a year that addressed their experiences with DDLETB and the FET centres that they attend.

The review team encourages the enhancement of the learning environment for learners accessing their education from home by providing more support to those living in more disadvantaged situations. The laptop loan scheme rollout needs more investment and better accessibility.

Commendations

- The review team commends DDLETB's FET staff who, at centre and programme level, support learners to give them the best experience possible within the framework provided by DDLETB. Learners gave numerous examples of staff going above and beyond to support them. The review team heard that staff employed by DDLETB and who work in the FET centres are dedicated to their work, stopping at nothing to ensure a fulfilling learning environment for the learners.
- The review team commends DDLETB for the speed of response and efforts of DDLETB FET staff in adapting to Technology Enhanced Learning (TEL) in order to accommodate the learner experience during the Covid-19 Pandemic crisis.
- The review team commends DDLETB for the current supports in place for learners. It is evident that learners, both past and present, greatly appreciate the supports given to them. However, staff and faculty believe that more could be done by hiring and training more support staff in order to cater for the anxiety and damage caused by the recent pandemic.

Recommendation

- The review team recommends that DDLETB invest in resourcing additional counselling services for learners in FET centres. During the main review visit, it was confirmed that staff currently in charge of guidance counselling are overwhelmed by the number of learners that require their help. The review team recommends that DDLETB develop additional resources for learners in the areas of career guidance support, counselling supports, learning support (Maths & English), disability support services, and psychological support across FET provision.

Objective 3: Self-evaluation, Monitoring & Review

Self-evaluation, Monitoring & Review

As outlined in the submitted SER and Provider Profile, DDLETB's further education and training provision is located across 40 different centres and involves Adult Education Services (AES), further education colleges, dual provision schools, training centres and Youthreach centres. The ETB's services are guided by its statement of strategy 2017-2021 that contains four key strategic goals:

- Delivering a high-quality experience for learners
- Delivering high quality education and training programmes
- Organisation and staff development
- Effective communication and collaboration

The ETB is currently developing its new statement of strategy and having met senior staff during the main review week, the review team noted DDLETB's continued approach to quality assurance which has to date assisted in the realisation of its mission and strategic objectives.

As explained to the review team during meetings with senior management, in 2017 DDLETB completed the Executive Self-evaluation as part of a reengagement process with QQI. This engagement and subsequent report enabled the ETB to identify its strengths and areas for development with regards to quality enhancement and the approach it wished to take in the future. As part of this engagement, the ETB submitted a Quality Improvement Plan (QIP) to QQI which became an annual quality submission for the following three years. ETB FET staff confirmed to the review team that the initial QIP enabled DDLETB to further enhance its QA processes in areas of:

- Governance structures
- Improved programme monitoring
- The development of new policies and procedures
- The production and submission of an annual QIP to QQI

After meeting various staff, the review team learnt that overall responsibility and oversight for institutional self-evaluation, monitoring and review of its FET provision and services rests with the Quality Council. It is the ETB's QA Unit that is charged with ensuring this is actioned and monitored operationally as per the quality cycle. In Youthreach provision, each centre undertakes a centre evaluation and improvement plan that is measured against all 31 criteria of the Youthreach Quality

Framework. All FET services engage and complete some form of annual centre self–evaluation and improvement plan, though the review team noted a certain degree of inconsistency in this approach.

Some ETB FET staff fed back to the review team the need for a more standardised approach to annual monitoring and evaluation of centre provision but did highlight some other standardised QA processes in place which were working well, such as:

- Internal Verification (IV)
- External Authentication (EA)
- Results Approval Panels (RAP)
- All ETB centres monitor provision by obtaining feedback from learners.

During the main review visit, it was also confirmed that all FET services and second provider internal monitoring data sets are gathered, channelled through the ETB’s QA Unit and then monitored and reviewed by the Programmes Committee. The ETB’s Quality Assurance staff were highly commended by all FET coordinators across all centres for their support which has led to the development of close working relationships. It was noted that non-QQI and uncertified programmes are not included in the DDLETB QA governance system.

In 2018, DDLETB signed a strategic performance agreement with SOLAS for FET provision. DDLETB Further Education and Training Management Team (FMT) attend an annual meeting with SOLAS to discuss and review its service plan and delivery agreements. The review heard that this meeting is also an opportunity for the ETB to specifically review performance indicators and targets. The review team noted the key role the recent strategy and planning group plays in providing data analysis and monitoring information to the DDLETB Board regarding SOLAS training programmes and all other provision. Periodic surveys among learners, staff, employers and other stakeholders are embedded in DDLETB’s QA system. Parts of the organisation are being reviewed or audited constantly, to make sure all requirements are being met. DDLETB uses the outcome of these reviews, surveys and audits to improve learner experience.

The review team learned that DDLETB FET staff at centre level value the feedback gathered from learners, employers and second providers as the most important QA process in place in DDLETB. QA policy relating to course development came in second.

Commendation

- The review team commends DDLETB for developing and embedding quality assurance and enhancement governance structures and policies that contribute to a systematic approach to annual monitoring at an institutional level. Organising an external governance review clearly shows the dedication of DDLETB to constantly review their effectiveness and efficiency.

Recommendation

- The review team recommends that continuous professional development of DDLETB FET staff be managed and planned through a formal training needs analysis and review process. The review team deems this should be introduced in the academic year of 2023-24 and linked to the new statement of strategy.

Programme Monitoring & Review

During the main review visit, ETB FET staff outlined the governance and quality assurance structures in place that ensured all programmes are monitored and reviewed satisfactorily. It was evident to the review team that DDLETB is committed to the review and amendment of its programmes and content, with several arrangements in place. All programmes leading to a common awards system (CAS) award that are validated by QQI must seek initial internal approval by the course approvals committee. Thereafter, these programmes are reviewed and evaluated annually using data such as authentication outcomes, or learner, staff, and other stakeholder feedback. As previously mentioned in this report, assessment specifications are updated as required and this is overseen by a recently formed assessment development group who feed into the programmes' approval committee.

Through the ETB's course evaluation process, course teams for QQI-validated awards may change content and modules through the programme amendment process. Any programme adjustment must be within a twenty per cent tolerance to avoid having to go through a full re-validation. In centres where provision from Levels 1-3 is delivered, it was confirmed to the review team that programme development is informed by learner need and their development and include aspects of universal design for learning (UDL).

At the time of the main review visit, DDLETB confirmed to the team that a considerable number of QQI awards were due for review and this is currently being worked on with QQI and other ETBs.

The review team encourages DDLETB to ensure all ETB course teams take a leadership role in the review of their programmes through a planned periodic review process that is overseen by the QA Unit.

Recommendation

- The review team recommends that DDLETB ensure all programmes that require updating within a periodic review cycle are appropriately resourced to ensure appropriate curriculum design that meets the needs of learners and employers. This will also require prioritising programme reviews to resource reviews in the best order.

Oversight, Monitoring & Review of Relationships with External Parties

DDLETB has multiple relationships with external third parties including:

- Second providers e.g., contracted training providers (CTPs) and specialist training providers (STPs)
- Higher education institutions (HEIs)
- Employers
- Community providers

Second Providers

The review team noted that the range of second providers they encountered during the main review visit reported an involved and supported relationship with DDLETB. Many second providers have developed strong, close working relationships with the QA units and communications teams in ETB, mostly at a local level. They show flexibility and an innovative attitude. As contracted operators, they submit business plans and proposals for the courses they would like to run and often work with significantly disadvantaged groups. As a result, there are clear objectives to be met and a certain level of independence, while there is also an additional layer of monitoring and quality control from the ETB. This is an item that could be discussed between DDLETB and second providers. This collaborative process enhances their involvement in the QA process and focuses their staff on continuous course improvement.

The review team is of the opinion that their engagement with the ETB is positive overall, but this review process has highlighted areas for improvement as they work with the ETB more closely. The review team noted their commitment to being learner centred and they are to be commended for their flexibility during Covid-19.

Commendation

- The review team commends DDLETB for the level of support they give to second providers and the feedback from learners they provide to second providers.

Higher Education Institutions (HEIs)

During the main review visit, the review team found that HEIs were very positive about their relationship with DDLETB. They stated that learners tend to do better, get advanced entry and that very few learners coming from DDLETB drop out. Learners entering HE through the ETB route are generally more motivated than learners accepted from different routes. They do well when they continue in HE, some doing better than learners from other routes. All HE representatives met by the review team reported they were extremely positive about their cooperation with DDLETB. They confirmed that DDLETB are very forthcoming and willing to go the extra mile in the interest of their learners without limiting their scope to the Dublin area.

DDLETB is good at making learners believe that they are capable of continuing their education. “Students have blown us away with their potential and talent.” The review team is of the opinion that there could be more emphasis on the academic rigour required to continue in HE.

The review team noted that this group found it difficult to identify an area that could be improved and without exception valued the relationship with DDLETB.

The review team suggest strongly that DDLETB invest in creating pathways for learners to contribute to society by creating programmes that support the Euro Skills agenda or contribute to achieving Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). New and existing programmes should be developed to support these global goals and local needs.

The review team also suggests that DDLETB consider asking learners who have progressed and have successfully completed HE to help with marketing and image (e.g., Youthreach).

Commendation

- The review team commends DDLETB's success in influencing learners and encouraging their self-efficacy, enabling them to progress through an education system that perhaps may have failed them in their earlier years. The team also wishes to acknowledge those learners who have progressed through DDLETB to HE. They are examples of the motivation and commitment shown by DDLETB learners and are to be congratulated.

Recommendation

- The review team recommends that DDLETB develop further pathways for learners to contribute to society by creating programmes that support the Euro Skills agenda or contribute to achieving Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). New and existing programmes should be developed support these global goals and local needs.

Employers

The review team noted that employers, during the main review visit, reported a strong relationship with the ETB. Many of the employers with whom the review team met had made the initial approach to DDLETB.

The review team acknowledges that there are engagement strategies in place, however during discussions with employers it was evident to the review team that there is an opportunity for DDLETB to be more proactive in approaching employers with a view to building new relationships, and to develop a proactive employer engagement plan. The review team considers this would be beneficial particularly in areas where learners struggle to gain work placements, e.g., care homes etc. The review teams heard about the positive way members of staff interact with employers to secure work placements.

Employers spoke very highly of the relationship and interaction with DDLETB. It was noted that the ETB are open to discussing future developments with employers. Employers suggested to the review team that there may be a benefit in forming networked groups to work with the ETB.

The review team commends DDLETB for having proactive discussions with employers regarding employing learners with disabilities. Instead of considering the 'disability', they consider a person's skills.

Commendation

- The review team commends DDLETB's excellent relationships with employers and their combined efforts to consider future skill needs. DDLETB's employer engagement has been noted by the review team as important for informing the curricular content of the ETB's programmes.

Recommendation

- The review team recommends that DDLETB be more proactive in recruiting employers. Most of the employers the review team met had made the initial approach to ETB. The review team suggests that DDLETB establish a range of employer advisory boards in the academic year 2023-2024 that will contribute to ongoing curricular and programme evaluation.

Community Providers

The community providers met during the main review visit work with many of those marginalised in society and reported a positive relationship with DDLETB. There are opportunities to communicate regularly with the ETB and contact is good. They felt supported by the ETB and improvements are developed through an accessible feedback process.

However, the review team was informed that the administration and paperwork for their learners to access the feedback process has been difficult. There is a need for the substantial gap between accredited and non-accredited courses to be bridged for their learners, which could be addressed with further outreach and community programmes. There was a reported misunderstanding between the perception of the value of non-accredited courses for their cohort of learners and capturing their progression adequately while taking into account their challenges.

Recommendation

- The review team recommends that DDLETB gather qualitative data on the value of non-accredited courses for these learners who have come through the ETB to help with marketing and image. DDLETB should develop its training needs analysis and progression plans for these learners.



Section

4

Conclusions



Section 4: Conclusions

DDLETB, since its formation in 2013 with the merging of two VECs and, in 2014, the subsequent integration of three FÁS centres, has been involved in a significant transformation process in quality assurance. This journey and transition have presented challenges for the ETB as they have had to deal with a range of legacy issues such as complex QA systems, Policies and Procedures as well as outdated programmes. The ETB FET staff are working extremely hard to address and meet these challenges. The review team recognises and acknowledges the quality assurance achievements made by the ETB since the 2017 QQI Executive Self-evaluation Engagement.

The next stage of development is to establish a common QA system based on a strong institutional quality culture, which continues to prioritise the learner.

The review team considers its engagement with ETB FET staff to be peer led and the findings, commendations and recommendations set out below are the outcomes of a positive engagement with ETB FET staff at all levels. The recommendations made by the review are intended to be constructive and supportive to enable DDLETB to continue its QA journey. This journey will further improve the QA policies and procedures of the organisation and further enhance the teaching and learning experience of all learners.

4.1 Conclusions on Arrangements for Governance & Management of Quality

As a consequence of the 2018 DDLETB re-engagement with QQI, a governance system was developed by the ETB that was underpinned by two key principles.

1. The principle of cross services representation
2. The principle of separation of responsibility

These structures are now very well established with the Quality Council having delegated responsibility for overarching governance. In addition, the review team was impressed by the committee structure that supports the role of the Quality Council. Also, very evident in the QA structures is the broad range of staff who are involved and contribute to DDLETB Governance. The review team recognises that since its formation, DDLETB has been a forerunner nationally with regards to FET QA Governance and these systems and processes were strongly tested across centres and programmes during the Covid-19 pandemic with resounding success.

The review team was pleased to learn of the ETB's next phase in reviewing and refreshing its governance processes further. Recently DDLETB commissioned an external body to carry out a review of its existing governance system in consultation with staff and members of the governance units. This review focused on a number of key themes.

As a result of this proactive approach, a number of draft recommendations have arisen for reflection and consideration. The review team commends DDLETB for undertaking this internal review as it demonstrates its ability and desire to reflect on its QA Governance and procedures with a view to self-improvement.

4.2 Conclusions on Arrangements for Teaching, Learning & Assessment

It was very evident to the review team that DDLETB makes a firm commitment and takes a supportive approach to learners and that learners are at the centre of all ETB operations and strategic ambitions. DDLETB is striving to fulfil this objective of being learning centred and this is becoming part of the institutional culture.

This is clearly articulated in DDLETB's statement of strategy 2017-2021 and is also prominent in the SER (p. 123); it was confirmed in discussions between the team and ETB FET staff and in particular the senior management team (SMT). SMT explained to the review team that 'The Learner Experience' would be central to the next iteration of the strategic statement.

During the review, the team heard from senior and teaching staff that the physical environment where its FET provision is delivered varies considerably and that maintaining and upgrading centres, schools and colleges to an acceptable level is a challenge due to annual budgetary constraints.

DDLETB's building services team work internally with SMT and externally with both SOLAS and DFHERIS in an attempt to secure funding for FET projects and maintenance and repair.

The conclusion from the team to date is that the SMT of DDLETB are to be commended on their commitment to improving the teaching and learning environments for learners and the case study in the SER on p.124 illustrates this to the review team.

During the review, the majority of apprentices spoke highly of their teaching, learning and assessment experience but a few highlighted concerns about the out-datedness of teaching content, and resources that support this. While SOLAS, as coordinating provider, is responsible for the development of the curriculums for the new craft apprenticeships, the review team has highlighted this challenge in the body of the report and warmly welcome DDLETB's acknowledgement through the SER and in meetings that a strategy is in place to address it.

Another conclusion formed by the review team during its visit and deliberations was that a key strength of DDLETB is its ICT infrastructure that supports teaching, learning and assessment. This was tested during the pandemic. Evidence in the SER and from review meetings has confirmed that significant ICT resources and investment have been made to ensure FET learners in colleges and training centres have access to the best IT resources to support their learning.

The review team noted the very strong ETB commitment in the promotion of technology enhanced learning (TEL) and the ETB has had an action plan to develop this agenda in place for the past four years. This was confirmed via the SER (p. 127) and in discussions with staff.

DDLETB has identified as a strategic action that it will “develop teaching and learning strategies and resources to promote autonomous learning, collaborative learning and content that is created with the assistance of technology by our learners”.

As a consequence of this statement the review team was pleased to note that ETB FET staff are encouraged to develop their capacity to deliver in a learner centred manner and are strongly supported by ETB managers to avail of a wide range of CPD opportunities.

An important focus for the review team was to establish how consistent the learner experience was across DDLETB provision. The review team through this inaugural engagement was pleased to discover that the ETB has implemented initiatives that have enhanced the learner experience.

Examples of such enhancements include “Inclusive Teaching and Learning” that fosters inclusion. This approach, the team learnt from ETB FET staff, has led to the development of new toolkits and guides across the ETB FET provision. This initiative is further enhanced by and supported by the adoption of Universal Design for Learning (UDL) that the review team learnt will shape the future of ETB teaching and learning strategies through the use of technology enhanced learning (TEL).

The review team acknowledges DDLETB will face a number of key challenges in the future.

The first of these is to deal with the complex legacy systems currently operating in FET provision and to design and implement a new harmonised QA methodology. ETB's FET staff confirmed to the review team that this was their intention but at the moment they were not in a position to give an indication of what this new system might look like. It was, however, evidence for the review team of the sound QA processes that are currently operating to maintain academic standards and enhance the learner experience.

The second challenge for DDLETB is to identify all legacy programmes and have the curriculum and assessment methodologies in these programmes updated. The review team recognises the significant resources and time required to undertake these developments. They also recognise the significant experience and capacity for curriculum design that exists within the ETB. As a consequence of this experience and the QA process currently in place the review team hopes DDLETB will continue to secure QQI awarding/validation powers that will enable them to deal with this curriculum challenge.

4.3 Conclusions on Arrangements for Self-Evaluation, Monitoring & Review

The review team concludes that DDLETB has been on a developmental journey with regards to self-evaluation, monitoring and review at an institutional level that began with the Executive Self-evaluation report in 2018 and now involves the 2022 Inaugural Review Self-evaluation Process. These engagements have enabled DDLETB to organically develop and embed sound processes and oversight with regards to self-evaluation, monitoring and review that have led to significant enhancement activities across all ETB provision in recent years.

The review team also considers DDLETB to have the appropriate monitoring, evaluation, and governance processes in place to ensure its strategic performance agreement with SOLAS is appropriately and regularly reviewed with regard to:

- Learner participation rates
- Learner completion rates
- Targeted sector provision

The review team acknowledges and notes the key role the ETB Strategy and Planning Unit plays in this area of evaluation.

The overall conclusion of the review team is that DDLETB has effective monitoring processes in place for its programmes across all levels, including:

- Annual quality improvement plans
- Centre-level Youthreach and centre evaluations
- Results approval processes
- Internal verification and external authentication processes
- Programme reviews and amendment
- Module review

These processes provide an assurance to the review team of DDLETB's ongoing efforts to ensure academic standards are maintained in order to preserve the integrity of all ETB programmes.

One area of further development the review team considers would be beneficial to the ETB is to widen further the self-evaluation and monitoring process to all business and support functions that support the student experience.

4.4 Commendations

1. The review team commends DDLETB for engaging with a wide range of staff, learners and stakeholders in the SER process, despite the challenging circumstances of Covid-19 forcing the SER to be created mostly online.
2. The review team commends DDLETB and has been impressed to see that learners and staff at all levels are aware and involved in closing the quality cycle on an annual basis. The review team met with many who were highly involved in delivering higher quality for learners and employers and conveyed to the review team that they appreciate the added value of periodic reviews and evaluations of their provision.
3. The review team commends DDLETB for ensuring balanced decision making is improved by making sure that all QA governance bodies in DDLETB consist of members who represent different areas within DDLETB.
4. The review team commends DDLETB for having brought together legacy issues and innovative QA practices to enhance their quality provision and monitoring.
5. The review team commends DDLETB for the development of shared internal verification (IV), external authentication (EA) and results approval panel (RAP) procedures for all FET services. The review team considers this to have been a wonderful journey with an excellent result. This successful development should be used as a blueprint for other projects where the integration of QA procedures is required.
6. The review team commends DDLETB's centre management for starting to move from maintaining differences between the centres to sharing good practice and policies, implementing them across centres and collaborating to solve problems.
7. The review team commends DDLETB for making a wide range of continuing professional development (CPD) opportunities available to staff. As an education provider, this is an important initiative.

8. The review team commends DDLETB and encourages the ETB to promote the Levels 5 and 6 major awards in Early Learning and Care and the establishment of a partnership network, using communities of practice (CoPs) as a working method and model of good practice in curriculum design and QA processes and to expand this to other appropriate curricular areas.
9. The review team commends the commitment of DDLETB FET staff in preparing learners for their next steps, either in employment or further education. The FET provision is noted for being flexible and including options for a variety of diverse learners. The team also commends DDLETB for offering many supports to learners to enable them to transfer and progress across DDLETB, into HE and employment.
10. The review team commends DDLETB's commitment to a fair and equal assessment process for its learners, and to continual improvement of assessment methods that support the integrity of the results learners achieve.
11. The review team commends DDLETB's work with Youthreach. The entire review team were very touched by the work of ETB Youthreach staff that frequently leads to life-changing opportunities for many young people who have opted out of mainstream education.
12. The review team commends DDLETB for the way it addressed the challenges of Covid-19 restrictions by moving quickly to a remote teaching and assessment methodology and resolving issues by engaging with all stakeholders.
13. The review team commends DDLETB for having invested, along with SOLAS and QQI, in generating a large amount of data that can be relevant to the strategy and daily operations of DDLETB. Steps are being made to generate more focused and constructive information, to improve data-supported decision-making.
14. The review team commends DDLETB for its open and transparent approach to making information available to the public, internal and external stakeholders. DDLETB has a number of high-quality communications channels on its clear, comprehensive website.

15. The review team commends the dedication of DDLETB FET staff and learners to achieving a productive and inclusive learning environment. Throughout the review it was apparent that learners greatly appreciate a learning environment where they are given the chance to learn and increase their career opportunities.
16. The review team commends DDLETB for giving FET staff members the opportunity to enhance their IT skills through online training courses in order to cope with the pressure of working from home and interacting with learners.
17. The review team commends DDLETB for its rapid Covid-19 response and implementation of QQI-approved contingency guidelines that enabled learners to successfully complete their alternative assessments and achieve their awards.
18. The review team commends DDLETB's FET staff who, at centre and programme level, support learners to give them the best experience possible within the framework provided by DDLETB. Learners gave numerous examples of staff going above and beyond to support them. The review team heard that staff employed by DDLETB and who work in the FET centres are dedicated to their work, stopping at nothing to ensure a fulfilling learning environment for the learners.
19. The review team commends DDLETB for the speed of response and efforts of DDLETB FET staff in adapting to Technology Enhanced Learning (TEL) in order to accommodate the learner experience during the Covid-19 Pandemic crisis.
20. The review team commends DDLETB for the current supports in place for learners. It is evident that learners, both past and present, greatly appreciate the supports given to them. However, staff and faculty believe that more could be done by hiring and training more support staff in order to cater for the anxiety and damage caused by the recent pandemic.
21. The review team commends DDLETB for developing and embedding sound quality assurance and enhancement governance structures and policies that contribute to a systematic approach to annual monitoring at an institutional level. Organising an external governance review clearly shows the dedication of DDLETB to constantly review their effectiveness and efficiency.

22. The review team commends DDLETB for the level of support they give to second providers and the feedback from learners they provide to second providers.

23. The review team commends DDLETB's success in influencing their learners and encouraging their self-efficacy, enabling them to progress through an education system that perhaps may have failed them in their earlier years. The team also wishes to acknowledge those learners who have progressed through DDLETB to HE. They are examples of the motivation and commitment shown by DDLETB learners and are to be congratulated.

24. The review team commends DDLETB's excellent relationships with employers and their combined efforts to consider future skill needs. DDLETB's employer engagement has been noted by the review team as important for informing the curricular content of the ETB's programmes.

4.5 Recommendations

1. The review team recommends that DDLETB create a strategy that identifies and prioritises areas for improvement. For example, the development of a strategic and compliance framework which is risk-based to help DDLETB prioritise their strategic goals and fulfil their mission. The review team is of the view that by actively seeking constructive feedback from its stakeholders, the ETB could benefit from improved QA enhancement management processes.
2. The review team recommends that DDLETB continue developing a single, standardised quality assurance system for all its provision in the next academic year.
3. The review team recommends that DDLETB implement the recommendations identified in the external review of Quality Governance by O'Brien Governance Design (OBGD). The relaunching of the different governance roles is necessary in the next phase of development of the QA system. Expanding the role and organising the view of learners is recommended by the review team.
4. The review team recommends that DDLETB create a QA handbook that focuses on specific elements, including:
 - the standardisation and consistency of practice and documentation around annual monitoring and gathering data, including information relating to drop out rates, in order to work efficiently on attaining improvement for learners based on evidence presented by research and analyses
 - investment in quality culture (based on professionalism, leadership and ownership) using communities of practice (CoPs) and other methods to address issues experienced across the organisation. This will stimulate the professionalism and ownership of people involved, including learners.
 - seeking the balance between diversity (the different centres and activities) and standardisation
 - a policy review schedule that ensures that all policies are not being reviewed at the same time and that everyone involved in quality assurance is aware of the schedule
 - an accessible, easily read, simplified reporting system for all internal verification (IV), external authentication (EA) and results approvals panel (RAP) processes and procedures

- policy and processes on assessment. The review team recommends that DDLETB identify and review outdated Assessment Instrument Specifications (AIS)
 - a systematic internal review process whereby programmes that require updating can be identified within a periodic review cycle
5. The review team recommends that, while it is always appropriate to recruit the most qualified candidate, DDLETB also develop a diversity and inclusion agenda to be introduced into the current recruitment and selection process to reflect the diversity of the learner population.
 6. The review team recommends that DDLETB continue to review and update its programmes and to ensure they are current and up to date. Planning schedule can be part of the QA Handbook. The review Team recommends DDLETB identify all FÁS Legacy programmes that require updating and progress as a matter of urgency.
 7. The review team recommends that DDLETB use communities of practice as a working method and model of good practice in curriculum design and QA processes and expand this to other appropriate curricular areas. A more holistic approach should be taken in course development, involving industry experts, external authenticators, prospective learners and tutors in order to ensure a complete learning programme where the learner's needs can be fully met so that the learner become a highly employable member of the labour force.
 8. The review team recommends that work needs to be done to increase recognition of prior learning (RPL) so that opportunities are opened up for those who have built up on-the-job experience and to create a more accessible learning environment. It is important to acknowledge the importance of Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) when accepting individuals who have gone through the application process with no prior certified or accepted learning background.
 9. The review team recommends that DDLETB develop a set of key performance indicators (KPIs), perhaps in collaboration with other ETBs, for each of the services provided. Indicators can be motivating for all involved, including instructors and learners. At a local level, these indicators can be linked to risk assessment and strong leadership. The review team recommends that DDLETB set targets on essential indicators at corporate management level, to limit the number of indicators that need to be managed at each organisational level.

10. The review team recommends that DDLETB increase the effectiveness of its communication policy (including media policy) by monitoring and publishing results that appeal to more employers, learners and stakeholders in the community. This should include more qualitative data (testimonials, success stories, community involvement) in reports on quality assurance.
11. The review team recommends that DDLETB implement a standardised assessment of learners' level of English for relevant courses so that all learners can start at a base level and progress simultaneously, making it easier for learners to relate to each other.
12. The review team recommends that DDLETB invest in resourcing additional counselling services for learners in the FET centres. During the main review visit, it was confirmed that staff currently in charge of guidance counselling are overwhelmed by the number of learners that require their help. The review team recommends that DDLETB develop additional resources for learners in the areas of career guidance support, counselling supports, learning support (Maths & English), disability support services, and psychological support across FET provision.
13. The review team recommends that continuous professional development of DDLETB FET staff be managed and planned through a formal training needs analysis and review process. The review team deems this should be introduced in the academic year of 2023-24 and linked to the new statement of strategy.
14. The review team recommends that DDLETB ensure all programmes that require updating within a periodic review cycle are appropriately resourced to ensure appropriate curriculum design that meets the needs of learners and employers. This will also require prioritising programme reviews to resource reviews in the best order.
15. The review team recommends that DDLETB develop further pathways for learners to contribute to society by creating programmes that support the Euro Skills agenda or contribute to achieving Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). New and existing programmes should be developed support these global goals and local needs.
16. The review team recommends that DDLETB be more proactive in recruiting employers. Most of the employers the review team met had made the initial approach to ETB. The review team

recommends that DDLETB establish a range of employer advisory boards in the academic year 2023-2024 that will contribute to ongoing curricular and programme evaluation.

17. The review team recommends that DDLETB gather qualitative data on the value of non-accredited courses for these learners who have come through the ETB to help with marketing and image. DDLETB should develop its training needs analysis and progression plans for these learners.

4.6 Statements on Quality Assurance

The review team concludes that DDLETB has in place comprehensive and robust quality assurance policies and processes that fully meet the QQI core QA guidelines. Because of this there are high levels of confidence among ETB FET staff regarding quality assurance at an operational level. The ETB QA policies and procedures have been developed either locally or jointly through groups such as the Further Education Network that supports ETB Centre level QA practice.

Furthermore, the review team is pleased to note that DDLETB intends to enhance its QA processes further such as:

- Introducing a single QA system for all its provision
- Introducing a common Quality Assurance Handbook
- Developing a plan to ensure the inclusion of the learner voice in the Governance System

The review team notes that, following and intensive engagement, DDLETB's quality assurance policies and procedures are fully compliant with the QQI Core Statutory QA guidelines and the sectoral guidelines for ETBs. Recommendations made by the review team in this report are to assist DDLETB in further enhancing current QA policies and practice.

QQI's policy statements and criteria for access, transfer, and progression for learners clearly outlines the responsibilities for further, education and training and higher education providers. These responsibilities seek to ensure that providers have fair and consistent entry arrangements in place and that there are appropriate transfer and progression opportunities in place for learners. Having met with ETB learners, staff and employers, the review team is satisfied that the procedures in place for access, transfer and progression operate fully with QQI policy guidelines.

The review team notes that DDLETB has shown leadership and ownership of its Further Education and Training (FET) through a very well-established quality assurance unit and institutional structures that support the achievement of ETB strategic goals.

The review team found sound ETB governance and QA policies and a strong desire among all DDLETB FET staff to create a systematic quality culture and improve the approach to quality enhancement across the entire organisation.



Section

5

ETB Review Response

Section 5: ETB Review Response

Response to QCI Inaugural Review Report

Introduction

Dublin and Dún Laoghaire Education and Training Board (DDLETB) welcomes the Quality and Qualifications Ireland (QQI) Inaugural Statutory Review, carried out in May 2022. The purpose of this process was to evaluate the implementation and effectiveness of the quality assurance systems within DDLETB's Further Education and Training (FET) services.

Preparation for this inaugural review process began with the ETB undertaking a detailed self-evaluation process across all its FET services, which provided an opportunity to critically reflect on its provision, identifying areas of effective practice, in addition to areas for future improvement. That self-evaluation process was followed by a week-long review visit which provided the opportunity for a thought-provoking and robust engagement with a panel of national and international experts and peers. DDLETB greatly valued the opportunity to engage with, and learn from the insights, experience, and advice of the Review Panel. The final stage of this Inaugural Review process will be the development of an Action Plan to address the findings of the Self-Evaluation Report and the recommendations of the Review Panel.

Response to Commendations

DDLETB warmly welcomes the extensive commendations made by the Review Panel in their report. Given the unique challenges of the past two years, the panel's commendation of the speed, agility and efficacy of DDLETB's response to the COVID-19 pandemic in moving to remote delivery and assessment, is particularly appreciated.

Furthermore, as this is a review of the effectiveness of DDLETB's Quality Assurance (QA) system, the Review Panel's commendations in that regard are welcomed: this includes the panel's recognition and commendation of staff engagement in the annual quality cycle, the representation of all FET services in QA governance bodies to ensure balance in its quality assurance and enhancement systems, recognition of DDLETB's efforts to address legacy QA issues through innovative QA practices and the development of shared QA documentation across all centres and services.

Further commendations included a recognition of the range of professional development opportunities which are made available to staff, the development of the ELC programme as a model for future programme development, as well as a recognition of the ETB's commitment to gathering data to support evidence-based decision making.

Finally, DDLETB particularly welcomes the panel's recognition of the commitment of FET staff to provide a supportive, productive and inclusive environment, one which "keeps the learner at the heart of all we do." The ETB thanks the panel for the advice and guidance given throughout this process, which will help to ensure that it never loses sight of that ambition as it continues to develop and enhance its QA systems.

Response to Recommendations

DDLETB welcomes the recommendations which are intended to support the ongoing development of its QA systems; it is heartened to note that so many of those recommendations were identified as areas for improvement in the Self-Evaluation Report. These include the development of a single, standardised QA system for all FET provision which will include the development of a common QA manual, the development of a Recognition of Prior Learning policy, as well as the development of a systematic approach to identifying staff training needs. DDLETB further notes that a number of those recommendations are already being implemented. These include the ongoing development of a new Statement of Strategy, the implementation of the recommendations from the external QA governance review, and the development of an enterprise engagement unit.

The report identified the challenge that DDLETB faces with regards to legacy programmes and curricula which need to be updated. This challenge is acknowledged and it is recognised that many existing QQI Common Awards System (CAS) awards need to be reviewed, and to that end DDLETB has recently engaged with QQI and the 15 other ETBs to explore sustainable models to review award standards and redevelop programmes across the sector. This work will be ongoing over the coming months.

The report further identified the need to update the curriculum of the craft apprenticeships. SOLAS, as Coordinating Provider has sole responsibility for the standards-based apprenticeships curriculum. As such, this is a national issue, but DDLETB will, of course, support any review process which SOLAS undertakes.

The report recommends that DDLETB develop further learner supports including the expansion of career guidance support, learning support, disability support and psychological support services which would require that new/additional posts are sanctioned by the Department of Education.

While the need to expand those learner supports was identified in the Self-Evaluation Report by DDLETB and action has already been taken to ensure all learners across FET have access to consistent learner supports, it must be pointed out that all posts must be sanctioned by the Department of Education (DE). While sanction for a range of posts has been sought of the DE, DFHERIS (Department of Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science) and SOLAS, it is as yet unclear to what extent this recommendation can be met.

Finally, DDLETB welcomes further recommendations such as the expansion and standardisation of existing processes for the assessment of English for access purposes and the gathering of qualitative data on the value of non-accredited courses to support the progression of learners on those programmes. The sharing of ideas and good practices such as these, highlights the value of this process. DDLETB looks forward to reflecting on these, and all recommendations, when identifying priorities as part of the development of its Action Plan.

Conclusion

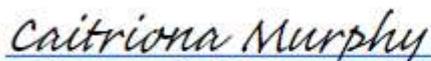
DDLETB is a learning organisation, and this Inaugural Review has been a learning process. It has provided the opportunity to reflect on DDLETB's governance and management of quality; its approaches to teaching, learning and assessment; and its self-evaluation, monitoring and review of its QA system, its programmes and its relationships with external stakeholders. Above all, it has provided the ETB with the opportunity to engage with, and learn from, a panel of peers.

Arising from that process, DDLETB warmly welcomes the confirmation that it has in place "comprehensive and robust quality assurance policies and processes that fully meet the QQI Core QA guidelines." It further welcomes that the Review Panel have noted that DDLETB has shown "leadership and ownership of its FET services through a very well-established quality assurance unit and institutional structures to support the achievement of the ETB's strategic goals." Finally, it welcomes the recognition by the review team that through sound ETB governance and QA policies, there is a strong desire among all FET staff to create a "systematic culture and approach to quality enhancement across the entire organisation."

The Review Panel used the analogy of DDLETB as a bridge “between learners and society as well as between learners and the labour market, Irish people and government. DDLETB, as part of the ETB sector, provides a path to a strong future for those who need just a little more attention and support.” DDLETB values the acknowledgement of its values and the personal, social and societal impact brought about by those values.

Finally, DDLETB would like to thank the members of the Review Panel, including the Chair, Frida Hengeveld, and the Coordinating Reviewer, Liam Curran for their insights and guidance which will support DDLETB in further strengthening that bridge, and smoothing the path for those learners. DDLETB would further like to thank QQI for their support throughout this process. Thank you to all staff, learners, partners and external stakeholders for their support, insights, and commitment in enhancing the culture of quality within DDLETB, and helping us to ensure that we continue to keep the learner at the heart of all we do.

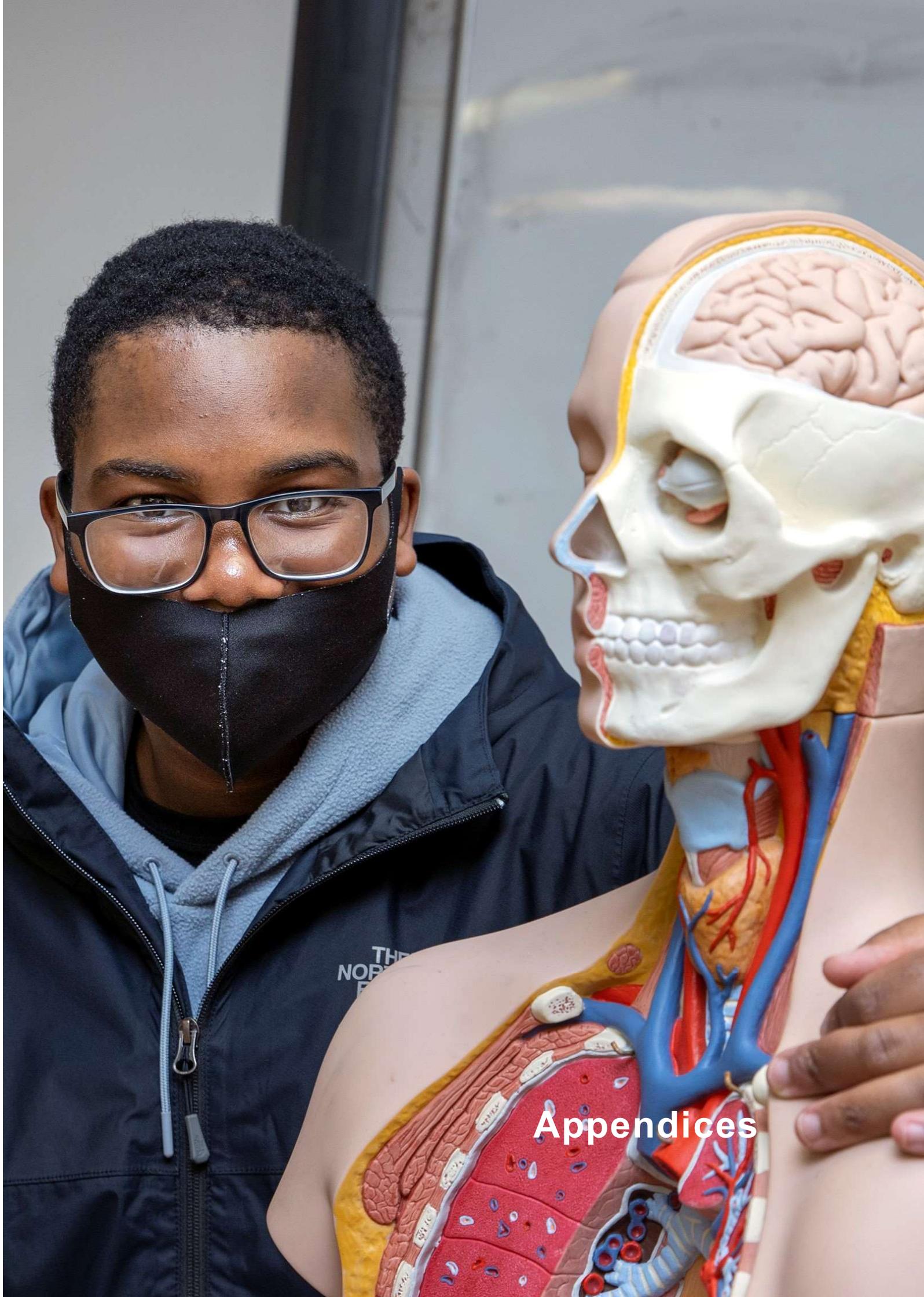
Yours sincerely,


Caitriona Murphy (Oct 18, 2022 11:47 GMT+1)

Caitriona Murphy 18/10/2022
Chief Executive


Siobhan Lynch (Oct 18, 2022 08:52 GMT+1)

Siobhan Lynch 18/10/2022
Director of Further Education and Training.



Appendices

Appendix A: Review Terms of Reference

Terms of Reference for the Inaugural Review of Quality Assurance in Education & Training Boards

1 Background and Context for the Review

1.1 QQI established Core Statutory Quality Assurance Guidelines for all providers in April 2016, and Sector Specific Quality Assurance Guidelines for Education and Training Boards (ETBs) in May 2017⁵. These guidelines collectively address the quality assurance responsibilities of ETBs as significant public providers of further education and training. The scope of the guidelines incorporates all education, training and related services of an ETB, leading to QQI awards, other awards recognised in the National Framework of Qualifications (NFQ), or awards of other awarding, regulatory or statutory bodies.

1.2 The Education and Training Boards (ETBs) were established under the Education and Training Boards Act (2013). They are statutory providers with responsibility for education and training, youth work and other statutory functions, and operate and manage a range of centres administering and providing adult and further education and training (FET). ETBs also administer secondary and primary education through schools and engage in a range of non-accredited provision. These areas are not subject to quality assurance regulation by QQI.

1.3 In 2018, all sixteen ETBs completed re-engagement with QQI. Following this process each ETB established its quality assurance (QA) policy and procedures in accordance with section 30 of the Quality and Qualifications (Education and Training) Act 2012. QQI recognises that those policies and procedures are reflective of the evolving and developmental nature of quality assurance within the ETB sector as it continues to integrate the legacy body processes.

1.4 As outlined in QQI's Core QA Guidelines, quality and its assurance are the responsibility of the provider, i.e., an ETB, and review and self-evaluation of quality is a fundamental element of an

⁵ Policy for the Inaugural Review of Quality Assurance in Education and Training Boards (QQI, 2019)

ETB's quality assurance system. A provider's external quality assurance obligations include a statutory review of quality assurance by QQI. QQI review functions are set out in various sections of the Qualifications and Quality Assurance (Education and Training) Act (2012) as amended (henceforth 'the 2012 Act'). The reviews relate to QQI's obligation under Section 27(b) of the 2012 Act (to establish procedures for the review by QQI of the effectiveness and implementation of a provider's quality assurance procedures) and to section 34 of the 2012 Act (the external review by QQI of a provider's quality assurance procedures).

1.5 An external review of quality assurance has not been previously undertaken for the ETBs, neither through QQI nor former legacy awarding body processes. QQI is cognisant of the ETBs' current organisational context in which the establishment of comprehensive and integrated quality assurance systems is an ongoing process. A primary function of the reviews will thus be to inform the future development of quality assurance and enhancement activities within the organisations. Following the completion of the sixteen review reports, a sectoral report will also be produced identifying systemic observations and findings.

1.6 The 2012 Act states that QQI shall consult with SOLAS (the state organisation responsible for funding, co-ordinating and monitoring further education and training in Ireland) in carrying out a review of education and training boards. This will take the form of consultation with SOLAS on the Terms of Reference for the review and the provision of contextual briefing by SOLAS to review teams.

2 Purposes

2.1 QQI has specific multi-dimensional purposes for its quality assurance reviews. The Policy for the Inaugural Review of Quality Assurance in Education and Training Boards outlines six purposes for this review process. Those purposes, and the ways in which they will be achieved and measured, are as follows:

Purpose	Achieved and Measured Through
<p>1. To encourage a quality culture and the enhancement of the learning environment and experience within ETBs</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Emphasising the learner and the learning experience in reviews. • Constructively and meaningfully involving staff at all levels of the organisation in the self-evaluation and external evaluation phases of the review. • Providing a source of evidence of areas for improvement and areas for revision of policy and change and basing follow-up upon them. • Exploring innovative and effective practices and procedures. • Providing evidence of quality assurance and quality enhancement within the ETB.

<p>2. To provide feedback to ETBs about organisation-wide quality and the impact of mission, strategy, governance and management on quality and the overall effectiveness of their quality assurance.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Emphasising the ownership, governance and management of quality assurance at the corporate ETB-level, i.e., how the ETB exercises oversight of quality assurance. • Pitching the review at a comprehensive ETB-wide level. • Evaluating compliance with legislation, policy and standards. • Evaluating the impact and effectiveness of quality assurance procedures.
<p>3. To improve public confidence in the quality of ETB provision by promoting transparency and public awareness.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Adhering to purposes, criteria and outcomes that are clear and transparent. • Publication of clear timescales and terms of reference for review. • Evaluating, as part of the review, ETB reporting on quality assurance, to ensure that it is transparent and accessible. • Publication of the individual ETB reports and outcomes of reviews in accessible locations and formats for different audiences. • Publication of sectoral findings and observations.
<p>4. To support system-level improvement of the quality of further education and training in the ETBs.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Publishing a sectoral report, with system-level observations and findings. • The identification and dissemination of effective practice to facilitate shared learning.
<p>5. To encourage quality by using evidence-based, objective methods and advice.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Using the expertise of international, national, learner, industry and other stakeholder peer reviewers who are independent of the ETB. • Ensuring that findings are based on stated evidence. • Facilitating ETBs to identify measures for quality relevant to their own mission and context. • Promoting the identification and dissemination of examples of good practice and innovation
<p>6. To provide an opportunity for ETBs to articulate their stage of development, mission and objectives and demonstrate the quality assurance of their provision, both individually and as a sector.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Publication of self-evaluation reports, conducted with input from ETB learners and wider stakeholder groups. • Publication of the reports and outcomes of reviews in accessible locations and formats for different audiences.

3 Objectives and Criteria for Review

3.1 The core objective of the external review is **to evaluate the implementation and effectiveness of an ETB's quality assurance procedures**. As this is the inaugural review, it will have a particular emphasis on the arrangements established to date to support the operation of the quality assurance system. Recognising that the development and implementation of an ETB-wide quality assurance system and procedural framework is an ongoing process, the review will also have a forward-looking dimension and will explore the ETB's plans and infrastructure to support the ongoing development of these systems. The review will thus examine the following:

Objective 1: Governance and Management of Quality:

Evaluate the comprehensive oversight arrangements and transparent decision-making structures for the ETB's education and training and related activities within and across all service provision (for example FE colleges, training centres, community-based education services, contracted providers, collaborative partnerships/arrangements).

The governance and quality management systems would be expected to address:

Indicative Matters to be Explored

a) The ETB's mission and strategy

- How/do the ETB's quality assurance arrangements contribute to the fulfilment of these?
- Is the learner experience consistent with this mission?

b) Structures and terms of reference for the governance and management of quality assurance

- Are the arrangements sufficiently comprehensive and robust to ensure strong governance and management of operations (e.g., separation of responsibilities, externality, stakeholder input)?
- Is governance visible and transparent?
- Where multi-level arrangements exist (i.e., where responsibilities are invested in centre managers), is there sufficient clarity, co-ordination, corporate oversight of, and accountability for, these arrangements?

c) The documentation of quality assurance policy and procedures

- How effective are the arrangements for the development and approval of policies and procedures?

- Are policies and procedures coherent and comprehensive (do they incorporate all service types and awarding bodies?), robust and fit for purpose?

- Are policies and procedures systematically evaluated?

d) Staff recruitment, management and development

- How does the ETB assure itself as to the competence of its staff?

- How are professional standards maintained and enhanced?

- How are staff informed of developments impacting the organisation and how can they input to decision-making?

e) Programme development, approval and submission for validation

- What arrangements are in place to ensure alignment of programme development activity with strategic goals and regional needs?

- Are the arrangements for the approval and management of programme development robust, objective and transparent?

- What arrangements are in place to facilitate and oversee a comprehensive programme development process in advance of submission for validation (e.g., the conduct of research, inclusion of external expertise, writing learning outcomes, curricula etc.)?

- Are there structures in place to support collaborative programme development with other ETBs/providers?

f) Access, transfer and progression

- How does the ETB quality assure access, transfer and progression systematically across all programmes and services?

- Are there flexible learning pathways, respecting and attending to the diversity of learners?

- Are admissions, progression and recognition policies and processes clear and transparent for learners and implemented on a consistent basis?

g) Integrity and approval of learner results, including the operation and outcome of internal verification and external authentication processes

- What governance and oversight processes are in place to ensure the integrity of learner assessment and results?

- How does the ETB ensure that these arrangements provide for consistent decision-making and standards across services and centres?

h) Information and data management;

- What arrangements are in place to ensure that data are reliable and secure?
- How are data utilised as part of the quality assurance system?
- What arrangements are in place to ensure the integrity of learner records (including, where relevant, the sharing of learner data with other providers on national apprenticeships)?
- How is compliance with data legislation ensured?

i) Public information and communications;

- Is information on the quality assurance system, procedures and activities publicly available and regularly updated?

Indicative Matters to be Explored

- What arrangements are in place to ensure that published information in relation to all provision (including by centres) is clear, accurate, up to date and easily accessible?

Objective 2: Teaching, Learning and Assessment

Evaluate the arrangements to ensure the quality of teaching, learning and assessment within the ETB and a high-quality learning experience for all learners. These will include:

Indicative Matters to be Explored

a) The learning environment

- How/is the quality of the learning experience monitored?
- How/are modes of delivery and pedagogical methods evaluated to ensure that they meet the needs of learners?
- How is the quality of the learning experience of learners on work placements ensured?
- Is there evidence of enhancement in teaching and learning?

b) Assessment of learners

- How is the integrity, consistency and security of assessment instruments, methodologies, procedures and records ensured – including in respect of recognition of prior learning?
- How is the standard of assessment of learners on work placements ensured – particularly where these are undertaken by non-ETB staff?
- Do learners in all settings have a clear understanding of how and why they are assessed and are they given feedback on assessment?

c) Supports for learners

- How are support services planned and monitored to ensure that they meet the needs of learners?
- How does the ETB ensure consistency in the availability of appropriate supports to learners across different settings/regions?
- Are learners aware of the existence of supports?

Objective 3: Self-Evaluation, Monitoring & Review

Evaluate the arrangements for the monitoring, review and evaluation of, and reporting on, the ETB's education, training and related services (including through third-party arrangements) and the quality assurance system and procedures underpinning them. It will also reflect on how these processes are utilised to complete the quality cycle through the identification and promotion of effective practice and by addressing areas for improvement. This will include:

Indicative Matters to be Explored

a) Self-evaluation, monitoring and review (including programme and quality review)

- What are the processes for quality assurance planning, monitoring and reporting?
- Are the processes for self-evaluation, monitoring and review (including the self-evaluation report undertaken for the inaugural review) comprehensive, inclusive and evidence-based?
- Is there evidence of strategic analysis and follow-up of the outcome of internal quality assurance reviews and monitoring (e.g., review reports, external authenticator reports, learner feedback reports etc.)?
- How is quality promoted and enhanced?

b) Programme monitoring and review

- How are programme delivery and outcomes monitored across multiple centres (including collection of feedback from learners/stakeholders)?
- Are mechanisms for periodic review of programmes comprehensive, inclusive and robust?
- Is there evidence that the outcome of programme monitoring and review informs programme modification and enhancement?
- Are the outputs of programme monitoring and review considered on a strategic basis by the ETB's governance bodies to inform decision-making?

c) Oversight, monitoring and review of relationships with external/third parties (in particular, with contracted training providers, community training providers, and other collaborative provision).

- How does the ETB ensure the suitability of the external parties with which it engages?
- Is the nature of the arrangements with each external party published?
- Is the effectiveness of these arrangements monitored and reviewed through ETB governance?
- Does the ETB assess its impact within the region and local communities?

3.2 In respect of each dimension, the review will:

- i. evaluate the effectiveness of ETB's quality assurance procedures for the purposes of establishing, ascertaining, maintaining and improving the quality of further education, training, and related services; and
- ii. identify perceived gaps in the internal quality assurance mechanisms and the appropriateness, sufficiency, prioritisation and timeliness of planned measures to address them in the context of the ETB's current stage of development; and
- iii. explore achievements and innovations in quality assurance and in the enhancement of teaching and learning.

3.3 Following consideration of the matters above, the review will:

- Provide a qualitative statement about the effectiveness of the quality assurance procedures of the ETB and the extent of their implementation;
- Provide a statement about the extent to which existing quality assurance procedures adhere to QQI's Quality Assurance Guidelines and policies (as listed at 3.4), to include an explicit qualitative statement on the extent to which the procedures are in keeping with QQI's Policy Restatement and Criteria for Access, Transfer and Progression in Relation to Learners for Providers of Further and Higher Education and Training;⁶
- Provide a qualitative statement on the enhancement of quality; and
- Identify effective practice and recommendations for further improvement.

⁶ <https://www.qqi.ie/Downloads/ATP%20Policy%20Restatement%20FINAL%202018.pdf>

3.4 The implementation and effectiveness of QQI's Core Quality Assurance Guidelines will be considered in the context of the following criteria:

- The ETB's mission and objectives for quality assurance;
- QQI's Sector-Specific Quality Assurance Guidelines for Education and Training Boards
- QQI's Topic-Specific Quality Assurance Guidelines for Providers of Statutory Apprenticeship Programmes;
- QQI's Topic-Specific Quality Assurance Guidelines for Blended Learning;
- QQI's Policy Restatement and Criteria for Access, Transfer and Progression in Relation to Learners for Providers of Further and Higher Education and Training;
- QQI's Policies and Criteria for the Validation of Programmes of Education and Training; and
- Relevant European guidelines and practice on quality and quality assurance

4 The Review Team

4.1 QQI will appoint a review team to conduct the review. Review teams are composed of peer reviewers who are learners; leaders and staff from comparable providers; and external representatives including employer and civic representatives. The size of the team will depend on the size and complexity of the ETB but in general will comprise five or six persons. A reviewer may participate in more than one ETB review.

4.2 QQI will identify an appropriate team of reviewers for each review who are independent of the ETB with the appropriate skills and experience required to perform their tasks. This will include experts with knowledge and experience of further education and training, quality assurance, teaching and learning, and external review. It will include international representatives and QQI will seek to ensure diversity within the team. The ETB will have an opportunity to comment on the proposed composition of their review team to ensure there are no conflicts of interest. The roles and responsibilities of the review team members are as follows⁷:

Chairperson

4.3. The chairperson is a full member of the team. Their role is to provide tactical leadership and to ensure that the work of the team is conducted in a professional, impartial and fair manner, and in compliance with the Terms of Reference. The chairperson's functions include:

⁷ Further detail on the conduct of reviewers is outlined in QQI's Code of Conduct for Reviewers and Evaluators.

- Leading the conduct of the review and ensuring that proceedings remain focused.
- Coordinating the work of reviewers.
- Fostering open and respectful exchanges of opinion and ensuring that the views of all participants are valued and considered.
- Facilitating the emergence of evidence-based team decisions (ideally based on consensus).
- Contributing to, and overseeing the production of, the review report within the timeline agreed with QQI, approving amendments or convening additional meetings if required.

Co-ordinating Reviewer

4.4 The co-ordinating reviewer is a full member of the team. Their role is to capture the team's deliberations and decisions during the proceedings and ensure that they are expressed clearly and accurately in the team report. It is vital that the co-ordinating reviewer ensures that sufficient evidence is provided in the report to support the team's recommendations. The role of the co-ordinating reviewer includes:

- Acting as the liaison between the review team and QQI; and, during the main review visit, between the review team and the ETB review co-ordinator.
- Maintaining records of discussions during the planning and main review visits.
- Co-ordinating the drafting of the review report in consultation with the team members and under the direction of the chairperson within the timeline agreed with QQI.

All Review Team Members

4.5 The role of all review team members includes:

- Preparing for the review by reading and critically evaluating all written material;
- Investigating and testing claims made in the self-evaluation report and other ETB documents during the main review visit by speaking to a range of staff, learners and stakeholders.
- Contributing to the production of the review report, ensuring that their particular perspective and voice (i.e., learner, industry, stakeholder, international etc.) forms an integral part of the review.
- Following the individual ETB reviews, providing observations to inform the development of the sectoral report.

5 The Review Process and Timeline

5.1 The key steps in the review process with indicative timelines are outlined below. Specific dates for each ETB review will be outlined by QQI in accordance with the published review schedule.

Step	Action	Timeframe
Preparation	Preparation of a provider profile by each ETB (e.g., outlining mission; strategic objectives; local context; data on staff profiles; recent developments; key challenges).	6-9 months before first main review visit
	Provision of ETB data by SOLAS (e.g., data on learner profiles; local context; strategic direction).	
	Establishment of review teams and identification of ETBs for review by each review team, selected in accordance with the ETB provider profiles and data and in consultation with ETBs on potential conflicts of interest.	
Self-Evaluation Report (SER)	Preparation and publication by ETBs of individual, inclusive, whole-of-organisation self-evaluations of how effectively they assure the quality of teaching, learning and service activities.	11 weeks before main review visit
Desk Review	Desk review of the self-evaluation reports by the review teams.	Before initial meeting
Initial Meeting	An initial meeting of the review team, including reviewer training, briefing from SOLAS, discussion of preliminary impressions and identification of any additional documentation required.	5 weeks after submission of self-evaluation report 6 weeks before main review visit
Planning Visit	A visit to the ETB by the chair and co-ordinating reviewer of the review team to receive information about the self-evaluation process, discuss the	5 weeks after SER

Step	Action	Timeframe
	schedule for the main review visit and discuss any additional information requests.	6 weeks before main review visit
Main Review Visit	A visit to the ETB by the review team to receive and consider evidence from ETB staff, learners and stakeholders in respect of the objectives and criteria set out in the Terms of Reference.	11 weeks following receipt of self-evaluation report
Individual ETB Reports	Preparation of draft ETB review report by review team.	6-8 weeks after main review visit
	Draft report sent to ETB by QQI for a check of factual accuracy.	1 week following receipt by QQI
	ETB responds with any factual accuracy corrections	1 week following receipt
	Final report sent to ETB.	1 week following receipt of any factual accuracy corrections
	Response to review submitted by ETB.	2 weeks after receipt of final report
Outcomes	QQI considers findings of individual ETB review reports and organisational responses through governance processes.	Next available meeting of QQI Approvals and Reviews Committee
	ETB review reports are published with organisational response.	
Follow-Up	Preparation of an action plan by ETB.	1 month after QQI decision
	QQI seeks feedback from ETB on experience of review.	6 weeks after decision

Step	Action	Timeframe
	One-year follow-up report by ETB to QQI. This (and any subsequent follow-up) may be integrated into annual reports to QQI.	1 year after main review visit
	Continuous reporting and dialogue on follow-up through annual reporting and dialogue processes.	Continuous

Appendix B: Main Review Visit Schedule

Date: Monday 9th May 2022			
Time (GMT)	Group	Roles	Purpose
09.00-09.30	ETB Review Coordinator(s)/Director of FET	Director of Further Education and Training / QA Manager	Meeting with ETB Review Coordinator
09.30-10.00	Private Review Team Meeting		
10.00-10.15am	1. ETB Chief Executive	Chief Executive, DDLETB	Discussion of mission, strategic plan, roles and responsibilities for quality assurance and enhancement
10.15-11.00am	1a ETB CE & SMT	Chief Executive, DDLETB	
		Director of Further Education and Training (DFET), DDLETB	
		Director of Organisation, Support & Development (OSD), DDLETB	
		Director of Schools, DDLETB	
		Acting Director of Schools, DDLETB	
11:00-11.30am	Private Review Team Meeting		
11.30 - 11.45	Review Team Break		
11.45-12.30	2. Steering Group Representatives	QA Manager, DDLETB	Discussion of the development of the self-evaluation report
		Data Officer, Strategy and Planning Unit, DDLETB	
		Assistant Manager, Baldoyle Training Centre	
		Adult Education Officer, AES NE	
		Deputy Principal, Dundrum College of Further Education	
		External Representative	
12.30-1pm	Review Team Meeting		
1pm- 2pm	Review Team Lunch		

2pm-2.45pm	4. Parallel sessions with learners, including learners (max 3 groups)		
	Parallel session 4a (Unaccredited and L 1-3 current learners)	Conai Club House (Community Education) unaccredited crafts class	Discussion of learner experience
		Literacy and Internet Skills - Level 3. Adult Education Service (North East)	
		level 2 Adult Education Service Clondalkin (AES SW)	
		level 2 AES Clondalkin (AES SW)	
		Communications Level 3 and Internet Skills L3 Adult Education Service (NE)	
	Parallel session 4b (L4-5-6 current learners)	Level 4 Digital Media Blanchardstown Community Training Centre (BTC)	Discussion of learner experience
		level 4 Youthreach Priory General Learning 2022	
		level 4 Youthreach Balbriggan	
		Business Studies level 5 Blackrock Further Education Institute (BFEI)	
		Over the Counter Pharmacy Assistant Level 5 BFEI	
		Sallynoggin College of Further Education, learner accessing FSD studying Yoga teaching, Wellbeing & holistic studies at level 5	
		Level 4 Catering Blanchardstown	
		level 6 Dual Provision school, Collinstown Park CC, Data centre (mixed modules non-QQI)	
2.45-3pm	Review Team Break		
3pm-3.45pm	Parallel session 4c (Apprentices & other WB learners)	Motor mechanic apprentice, Baldoyle TC, finished Phase 2	Discussion of learner experience
		ATI apprenticeship, 2016+ Apprentice, 2nd year, BFEI	
		Carpentry and joinery craft apprentice, Dun Laoghaire Further Education Institute	
		Electrical Apprentice, Loughlinstown Training Centre	
		Electrical Apprentice	
		DFEI - NUIG Letterfrack- working, Graduate to HE and employment	Discussion of learner experience
		Dundrum College of Education, Graduate to employment	

	Parallel session 4d (Past Graduates in HE or employment)	Youthreach Rush, Graduate to employment, (teaching)	
		Professional Office Administration, Graduate in employment & subsequent promotion due to completion of further learning. Baldoyle Training Centre	
		Youthreach Blanchardstown is in DCU, first year of Hons Degree in Education	
		TUD scholarship programme, graduate to HE	
3.45-4.15pm	Private Review Team Meeting		
4.15pm-4.30pm	Review Team Break		
4.30-5.15pm	5. Parallel sessions with LEARNING PRACTITIONERS (max 3 groups)		
	Parallel session 5a (Unaccredited and L 1-3 learning practitioners)	Tutor - AES NE Unaccredited, L2& 3, Literacy & ESOL	Discussion of staff involvement in quality assurance and enhancement
		Tutor - AES NW, Communications, Numeracy, Digital and Family Literacy	
		Tutor - Adult Education Service SE, Unaccredited & Level 2 General Learning	
		Tutor - Youthreach (Youth, Education and Support Centre, Level 3 Employability Skills, YES Centre Clondalkin	
		Tutor - Literacy and Internet Skills	
		Level 3 Contracted Trainer, Employability Skills	
	Parallel session 5b (L4- 5-6 Learning Practitioners)	Tutor - Youthreach Rush, General Learning, Level 4	Discussion of staff involvement in quality assurance and enhancement
		Tutor - Adult Education Service North East Childcare Level 5	
		Instructor - Tallaght Training Centre, Beauty instructor, Level 5	
		Teacher - Dundrum College of Further Education Healthcare, Level 5	
		Teacher - Dun Laoghaire Further Education Institute, Levels 5 & 6, Media, Film and TV)	
	IT Tutor Adult Education Service, Blanchardstown,		
		Accountancy Apprenticeship coordinator/Instructor, Year 1 & 2 Blackrock Further Education Institute	Discussion of staff involvement in quality

	Parallel session 5c (Apprenticeship & other WBL instructors)	Asst. Manager, Tallaght Training Centre, Craft Apprenticeships	assurance and enhancement
		Contracted Training Instructor, Chevron Training, Level 6 Management	
		Early Childhood Care and Education Instructor, Ls 5 & 6	
		Apprenticeship instructor, Carpentry & Joinery, Tallaght Training Centre, Phase 2	
		Apprenticeship teacher Dun Laoghaire College of Further Education), Phases 4 & 6	
5.15pm-5.45pm	Review Team Meeting		

Date: Tuesday 10th May 2022			
Time (GMT)	Group	Roles	Purpose
09.00-09.30	ETB Review Coordinator	Director of Further Education and Training/ QA Manager	Meeting with ETB Review Coordinator
9.30-10.00	Private Review Team Meeting		
10.00-10.45	6. Learner representatives	IR Steering Group Student Representative, Psychology Level 6, IR Steering Group representative	Discussion with learners who act as representatives
		Student representative on College BoM (Blackrock Further Education Institute) Computer Science level 5, on BOM BFEI	
		Student representative on College Board of Management, Dundrum College of Further Education - SNA level 5	
		Class representative Childcare level 5 Adult Education Service NE	
		Fingal AES Learner - Represented for CMETB on QQI module review	
10.45-11.15	Private Review Team Meeting		
11.15-11.30	Review Team Break		
11.30-12.15PM	7. Parallel sessions with FET Coordinators		
		Adult Education Officer, Adult Education Service, South West	

	Parallel Session 7a: Heads of Centre/Coordinators - Unaccredited/level 1-3 provision	Youthreach Coordinator, Priory Youthreach	Discussion of QA arrangements, responsibilities and implementation
		Coordination, Specialist Training Programmes, Loughlinstown Training Centre	
		Adult Literacy Organiser, Adult Education Service (AES) North East	
		Adult Literacy Organiser, AES South East	
		Community Education Facilitator AES North West	
	Parallel Session 7b - Heads of Centre/FET Coordinators Level 4-6 provision (including training provision)	Principal, Dundrum College of Further Education	Discussion of QA arrangements, responsibilities and implementation
		Principal, Blackrock College of Further Education	
		Adult Education Officer AES North East	
		FET Coordinator, Greenhills Community College	
		Manager, Tallaght Training Centre	
	Coordinator, Balbriggan Youthreach		
12:15-12.45pm	Private Review Team Meeting		
12.45-1.45pm	Review Team Lunch/Break		
1.45-2.30pm	8. Second Providers (e.g., Representatives of Training Contractors, LTIs, CTCs)	Contract Training Manager, Chevron Training working with Baldoyle Training Centre	Discussion of arrangements for quality assurance and enhancement of education and training delivered by second providers
		Training Manager, Oiluna, Contracted Training Provider BTC	
		Manager Baldoyle Community Training Centre	
		Manager, Dun Laoghaire Community Training Centre	
		Director of Training Swilly Group, Contracted training provider - Training Centres	
		Area Manager, Specialist Training Provider - National Learning Network	
		Centre Manager EVE Plantmarket, Specialist Training Provider Autism & mental health	
		Manager St. John of Gods Training Unit	
2:30-3pm	Private Review Team Meeting		
3:00-3.15pm	Review Team Break		

3.15pm-4pm	9. Parallel sessions with external stakeholders (max 3 groups)		
	Parallel session 9a (Collaborating Providers)	ELC Collaborating Provider, QA Manager Cavan Monaghan ETB	Discussion of quality assurance arrangements for collaborative programmes, and other partnership relationships
		ELC writer/programme manager. Laois Offaly Education and Training Board	
		Director of Academic Affairs & Programme Development, Fastrack into Information Technology (FIT) Apprenticeship representative	
		Acting Head of Education at Accounting Technicians Ireland, Coordinating Provider	
		Senior Support & Development Officer for Erasmus+ at Leargas	
	Parallel session 9b (Higher Education)	Higher Education representative on Early Learning and Care programme development	Discussion of collaboration and engagement with HEIs, including consideration of ATP
		Progression Co-ordinator, Waterford Institute of Technology	
		Lecturer, Technical University Dublin - Grangegorman	
		Head of Centre, Letterfrack, Galway Mayo Institute of Technology (GMIT)	
		Assistant Head of Academic Affairs (Quality Framework), TUD Tallaght	
	Parallel session 9c (Community Providers & Groups, including representatives of Cooperation Hours)	Chair Quality Enhancement Committee, Head of Humanities & Arts Management, IADT	Discussion of ETB engagement with community groups
		Training Officer, Cairde (Community Health Organisation) / St. Michaels House	
		Coordinator, Aster Family Support	
		Coordinator, Ronanstown Community Development Project	
		Manager, HSE Conai Clubhouse	
4:00-4.30pm	Private Review Team Meeting		
4:30-4.45pm	Review Team Break		
4.45-5.30pm	10. Professional and Administration Services	Director Operation Support and Development	Discussion of the relationship between
		Head of Human Resources	

	(finance, HR and Facilities/IT, Communications, Marketing & operations/management)	Head of Information Technology	the ETB's quality assurance system and its professional functions
		Building Services	
		Strategy and Planning Manager, responsibility for FET Communications	
		Public Affairs Officer, Governance Section	
		Adult Education Officer, AES NW	
5.30pm-6pm	Private Review Team Meeting		

Date: Wednesday 11th May 2022			
Time (GMT)	Group	Roles	Purpose
09.00-09.30	ETB Review Coordinator	Director of FET/ QA Development Officer	Meeting with ETB Review Coordinator
9.30-10.00	Private Review Team Meeting		
10.00-10.45	11. Course Approvals Committee	Director of FET	Discussion of role of committee in quality assurance of programme development and approval
		QA Manager	
		Strategy & Planning Manager	
		QA Programme support	
		Principal, Dundrum College of Further Education	
		Adult Education Officer, AES SW	
10.45-11.15	Private Review Team Meeting		
11.15-11.30	Review Team Break		
11.30-12.15	12. Learning Practitioners (cross-section of services and programmes) involved in programme development and review	QA Officer (Early Learning Care & Module Reviews)	Discussion of staff involvement in programme development & review
		Teacher, Gardens & Park module Development, Dundrum College of Further Education	
		Asst Manager Loughlinstown Training Centre - Microcredential development in Sustainability Awareness,	
		ELC programme writer, Sallynoggin College of Further Education	

		Training Standards Officer, Tallaght Training Centre, AIS Development Coordination	
		AS Writer/evaluator	
12.15-12.45	Private Review Team Meeting		
12.45-1.45pm	Review Team Lunch/Break		
1.45-2.30	13. Employer and regional skills bodies representatives	Regional Skills Forum Manager Dublin	Discussion of the engagement of employers and regional skills bodies in strategic planning of programme delivery and quality assurance and enhancement activities
		Apprenticeship manager, Construction firm	
		HR & Training Manager - Fruit Wholesalers	
		Small business owner (Dental)	
		HR & Training Manager Chain of petrol forecourt retailers	
		Nurse Tutor Our Lady's Hospice	
	Owner and Manager Small business (Fast Food retail)		
2.30-3.00	Private Review Team Meeting		
3.00-3.15	Review Team Break		
3:15-4.00	14. ETB Employer Engagement Function	Strategy and Planning Manager	Discussion of the ETB's approach to, and experience of, employer engagement in responding to local skills needs and quality assuring provision
		PLC Apprenticeship Employer Engagement (Principal DFEI)	
		Manager, Tallaght Training Centre	
		Assistant Manager, Baldoyle Training Centre	
		Authorised Officer, Apprenticeships, Baldoyle Training Centre	
		Skills to Advance Officer, Loughlinstown Training Centre	
	Skills for Work Adult Education Service, North West		
4.00-4.30	Private Review Team Meeting		

Date: Thursday 12th May 2022

Time (GMT)	Group	Roles	Purpose
09.00-09.30	ETB Review Coordinator	Director of FET/QA Manager	Meeting with ETB Review Coordinator
9.30-10.00	Private Review Team Meeting		
10.00-10.45	15. Pathways - Information Recruitment and Guidance	Guidance Counsellor, Dundrum College	Discussion of arrangements for learner recruitment, access, transfer and progression
		Guidance Coordinator, AES SW	
		Guidance Counsellor, AES SE	
		Student Liaison Officer, AES NE	
		QA & Recognition of Prior Learning	
		Recruitment Officer, Baldoyle Training Centre	
10.45-11.15	Private Review Team Meeting		
11.15-11.30	Review Team Break		
11.30-1pm	16. Governance Review	Chair, Quality Council (QC)	Discussion of the roles of the governance units to date, the governance review, recommendations arising from the review and intended approach into the future
		Secretary, Quality Council	
		QC representative, Principal, Dundrum College of Further Education	
		QC representative, Adult Education Officer, AES North West	
		Programmes Committee, Vice Principal College of Further Education	
		Programmes Committee, Adult Education Officer, AES SE	
		QA Committee Chair, Principal, College of Further Education	
QA Committee, Asst. Manager, Baldoyle Training Centre			
1-2 pm	Review Team lunch		
2-2.30 pm	Private Review Team Meeting		
2.30-3.15 pm	17. Learner supports	ESOL Development Officer, DDLETB	Discussion of supports which are available to learners
		Deputy Principal, representing learner well-being team, Stillorgan College of Further Education	

		Apprenticeship literacy support, Adult Education Service (NE)	
		Authorised Officer, Loughlinstown Training Centre	
		Adult Literacy Officer, Adult Education Service (SW)	
		Guidance Counsellor, Sallynoggin College of Further Ed, Fund for Students with Disabilities	
		Assistant Manager, Special Training Provider programmes, Loughlinstown Training Centre	
3.15-3.30	Private Review Team Meeting		
3:30-3:45PM	Review Team Break		
3.45-4.30 pm	18. Quality Assurance Support	QA Manager, DDLETB	Discussion of the operation of the ETB's quality system, including arrangements for monitoring and review of quality
		QA Officer, DDLETB	
		Data Officer, DDLETB	
		Training Standards Officer, Tallaght Training Centre	
		Youthreach QA Coordinator, Balbriggan	
		Centre QA Coordinator, Adult Education Service North West	
4.30pm-4.45pm	Review Team Break		
4.45-5.30 pm	19. FET Supports	TEL Support, DDLETB	Discussion of a range of supports which are available to the FET services
		QA/Continuous Professional Development, DDLETB	
		Psychological Support Services	
		Development Officer	
		External Authenticator	
		External Authenticator	

Date: Friday 13th May 2022

Theme: Wrap-up

Time (GMT)	Group	Role	Purpose
9-9.30	20. Free Session		To be used as team needs. For example, meet participants from earlier session again, private session etc.
9.30-10.45am	Private Review Team Meeting	QQI representatives will join team at 10.15 for 15 minutes.	
10.45-11.30	21. Free Session		To be used as team needs. For example, meet participants from earlier session again, private session etc.
11-11.30am	22. QQI & ETB Review Coordinator/FET Director	Director of FET ETB Review Coordinator QQI representatives	QQI gathers feedback on the review process (Review Team not in attendance)
11.30-11.40	Private Review Team Meeting		
11.40-11.55	23. Initial feedback to CE	ETB Chief Executive, Review Team Review Team QQI representatives(s)	Initial feedback is given by the Review Team to the ETB Chief Executive, in advance of the Oral Feedback
12-12.30	24. Oral Feedback: Feedback presented by Review Team Chair. Attended by ETB Chief Executive, SMT, Self-Evaluation	Chief Executive	Oral feedback on initial review findings
		Director of FET	
		Director of OSD	
		Quality Manager	

	Steering Group, Group of Learners	Deputy Principal, Dundrum College of Further Education	
		External	
		Adult Education Officer, AES NE	
		Assistant Manager, Baldoyle Training Centre	
		Strategy & Planning Manager	
		QA Officers	
		Data Officer, Strategy and Planning Unit, DDLETB	
12.30-1	Review Team Break		
1-5.pm	Private Review Team Meeting		

Glossary of Terms

QQI glossary of terms and abbreviations from this report

Term	Definition/Explanation
2012 Act	Qualifications and Quality Assurance (Education and Training) Act 2012
AIS	Assessment Instrument Specifications
ATP	Access, Transfer and Progression
CAC	Course Approval Committee
CAS	Common Awards System
CEO	Chief Executive Officer
Core	Statutory Quality Assurance Guidelines, developed by QQI for use by all Providers
CoP	Communities of Practice
CPD	Continuing Professional Development
CTCs	Community Training Centres
DDLETB	Dublin and Dún Laoghaire Education and Training Board
EA	External Authentication / Authenticator
Erasmus+	European Community Action Scheme for the Mobility of University Students
ETB	Education and Training Board
EU	European Union
FET	Further Education and Training
FETCH	the Further Education and Training Course Hub
HEIs	Higher Education Institutions
HR	Human Resources
ICT	Information and Communications Technology

IRSG	Inaugural Review Steering Group
IT	Information Technology
IV	Internal Verification / Verifier
KPIs	Key Performance Indicators
LTIs	Local Training Initiatives
NFQ	National Framework of Qualifications
OSD	Organisational Support and Development
PLC	Post Leaving Certificate
QA	Quality Assurance
QQI	Quality and Qualifications Ireland
RAP	Results Approval Panel
RPL	Recognition of Prior Learning
SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals
SEN	Special Educational Needs
SER	Self-Evaluation Report
SOLAS (formerly FÁS)	The National Further Education and Training Authority (responsible for funding, co-ordinating and monitoring FET in Ireland)
SMT	Senior Management Team
STPs	Specialist Training Providers
TEL	Technology-Enhanced Learning
TSO	Training Standards Officer
UDL	Universal Design for Learning
VECs	Vocational and Education Committees (later became ETBs)
VTOS	Vocational Training Opportunity Schemes
WBL	Work-Based Learning

Youthreach

Service providing early school leavers without and formal qualifications with opportunities for basic education, personal development, vocational training and work experience